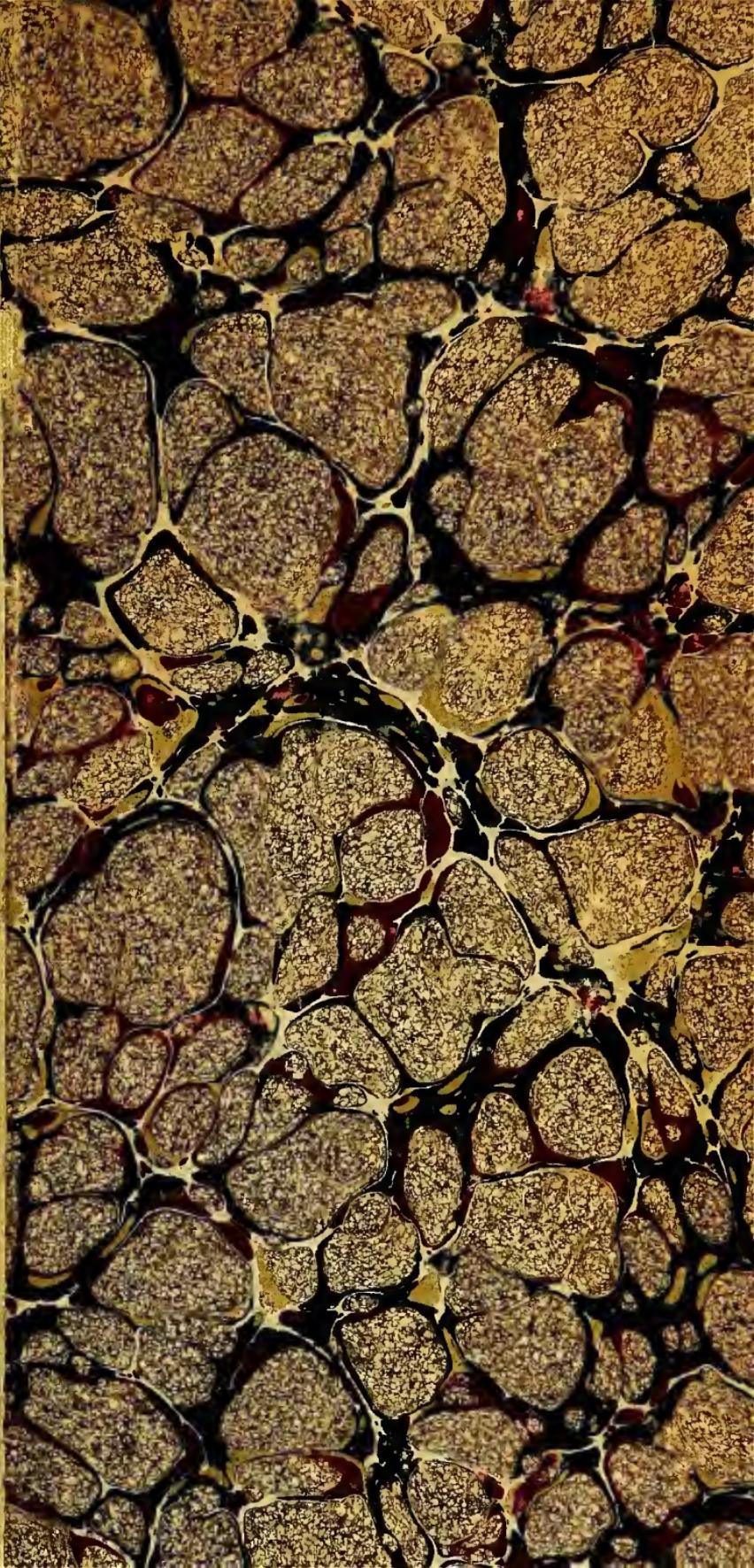


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# AN INQUIRY INTO THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE MIDDLETON-ROWLEY PLAYS.

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## I.

EARLY in the seventeenth century there appeared upon the English stage a mask and three admirable plays which were ascribed to the joint authorship of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley. They were "A Fair Quarrel," printed in 1617, with the announcement that it had been "acted before the King and several times publicly by the Prince his Highness' Servants;" "The World Tost at Tennis," an ingenious and pleasant mask, intended, as the Prologue has it, "for a royal night," and published in 1620; "The Changeling," noted by Sir Henry Herbert among the court performances of 1623; and "The Spanish Gipsy," acted about the same time at Whitehall by the same company, the Queen of Bohemia's.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The dates of *A Fair Quarrel* and of the mask appear on the title pages of the quartos. For *The Changeling* and *The Spanish Gipsy*, see "Note of such plays as were acted at court in 1623 and 1624"—Malone's *Shakespeare* (by Boswell), iii. 227. *The Old Law*, although assigned on the title page of the quarto to Middleton, Rowley, and Massinger, will not be considered here. The difficulties attending an investigation into its date and authorship will appear from one illustration. Its first production is usually dated 1599 (Fleay, *Chronicles of the English Drama*, ii. 100; Ward, *History of English Dramatic Literature*, ii. 72; Bullen, Introduction to the *Plays of Thomas Middleton*) on account of a remark of the Parish Clerk: "Agatha—born in 1540, and now 't is '99," iii. i. This scene Mr. Bullen regards as undoubtedly Rowley's. But it is excessively improbable that Rowley wrote it in 1599, eight years before his appearance in *The Travails of Three English Brothers*, 1607; for how should we explain the absolute inactivity during this time of a dramatist of such power as the author of this scene had shown himself to be, an inactivity broken at last only by the production of a little poor hack work done in subordination to Day and Wilson? This warring of probabilities is but one instance out of many. Moreover, convincing metrical tests are rendered almost impossible by the condition of the text of the quarto of 1656, the only early edition. Gifford says that it "appears to be a hasty transcript from the prompter's book," and Bullen that it is "deplorably corrupt." Evidently any opinion as to the authorship of this play must be advanced with extreme caution, and supported by evidence which it would

Even the casual reader will recognize among these plays two of the most remarkable productions of our early drama. It was "A Fair Quarrel" that called forth one of Charles Lamb's best known and most enthusiastic panegyrics, and "The Change-ling" not only won applause in the seventeenth century, as is shown by numerous court performances and its revival at the Restoration, according to Pepys "with success," but it has kept in such favor with readers that Mr. Swinburne hardly risks contradiction when he says of it and its authors that "it is a work which should suffice to make either name immortal."

The partnership of the authors of these plays, too, was in some respects a remarkable one. At the time their first play appeared, Middleton must have been well known as the author of a large number of clever comedies of manners and elegant masks,<sup>1</sup> a gentleman of letters of respectable family, who, after having been trained to the law and admitted to the bar, had devoted himself wholly to literature; while Rowley belonged to the class of actor-dramatists, and had written only two or three plays, which had not received, or apparently deserved, much notice. His fame must have depended largely upon his success as an actor, which, if we may judge from the character of his later roles, Plumporridge and Jaques,<sup>2</sup> the country clown, had been obtained in low comedy parts. An anecdote found in the rare little book, "Modern Jests, Witty Jeeres," or "The Banquet of Jests,"<sup>3</sup> makes it probable, moreover, that he was a good humored and companionable person, not unknown in the ordinaries and places of resort about the town; and he seems to have been a man of some business ability also, for he had been for several years head of the Prince's company of players, and the bills of the company were usually made out in his name. Certainly the partnership of such a man with a polished and

be impossible to introduce into a paper of this length; and, as will appear later, sufficient material may be found without introducing any as doubtful as this.

<sup>1</sup> *Blurt, Master Constable, The Phœnix, Michaelmas Term, A Trick to Catch the Old One, The Family of Love, Your Five Gallants and A Mad World, my Masters*, were printed before 1617; and in 1613-1614, he had written *The Triumphs of Truth* and the *Mask of Cupid*.

<sup>2</sup> *Dramatis Personæ*, attached to the Quartos of the *Inner Temple Masque* and *All's Lost by Lust*.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Dyce: *Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, i. Introduction.

satirical *littérateur* furnishes us with a phenomenon of no common interest, and it is made still more interesting by the fact that the partnership resulted in plays whose main plots are remarkable for unity of plan and consistency in the development of character, and which are unequalled not only by the work of either man alone, but even—as we may safely say of “The Changeling” at least—by few of the works of the greatest dramatists of a great age.

In spite of this interest, however, and of the peculiar merits of “A Fair Quarrel” and “The Changeling,” but little has been done to fix the respective shares of the two dramatists in the composition of these plays. We should not perhaps wonder at the carelessness of a seventeenth century public, and it is not to be regarded as evidence of any lack of appreciation of these pieces, for that was not a critical age, and the same carelessness is noticeable in the case of the popular idols, Beaumont and Fletcher; but it is somewhat surprising that more has not been done in this matter of late years. It is true Mr. Fleay has attempted to make a division. Indeed, he has assigned every scene of these plays to either one dramatist or the other.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, however, misprints have in some instances made his division uncertain.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, as he has allowed himself on several occasions to fall into downright contradictions<sup>3</sup> in his Middleton-Rowley work that cannot be accounted for as misprints, and has in no case given reasons for his statements, we cannot regard these as anything more authoritative than mere expressions of opinion, and cannot yield them unquestioning belief.

<sup>1</sup> *A Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama, 1559-1642*, by Frederick G. Fleay, London, Reeves and Turner, 1891, ii. 98-101.

<sup>2</sup> In his division of *A Fair Quarrel* (*idem*, ii. 98), Act II. 3, which does not exist, is assigned to Middleton; III. 2 is assigned to both Middleton and Rowley, while III. 1 is not mentioned.

<sup>3</sup> *Chronicles of the English Drama*, i. 231, he says: “*The Witch of Edmonton* was acted by the Prince(s Elizabeth's) servants at the Cockpit and at Court,” and *idem*, ii. 101: “Middleton makes no further appearance among Prince Charles' plays: but Rowley does in *The Witch of Edmonton*, April, 1621.” Again, in connection with *A Fair Quarrel*, he says (*Biog. Chron. etc.* ii. 98), “Is not this the same play as *A Vow and a Good One*, acted at court, 1623, Jan. 6, by the Prince's men?” And under Fletcher (*idem*. i. 270), he says of *The Chances*, “I think it likely that was the play, *A Vow and a Good One*, acted by them before the Prince, 1623, Jan. 6.”

The other critics, too, who have touched upon the matter have given us opinions hardly better substantiated. Mr. Bullen<sup>1</sup> says of the scene between Captain Ager and his mother in "A Fair Quarrel" only, "That scene and the duel scene I believe to belong to Middleton. To such a height of moral dignity and artistic excellence Rowley never attained. We may safely assign to Rowley the boisterous comic scenes. Apart from the scenes where Captain Ager and his mother are concerned, I cannot trace Middleton's hand with any clearness. At the end of the first act, Rowley's metrical harshness strikes upon the ear, and throughout the scene relating to Fitzallen and Jane we seldom escape from it." He speaks of "The Changeling" in similarly general terms. "I agree with Dyce in thinking Middleton had the chief share in 'The Changeling.' Rowley was probably responsible for the conduct of the underplot. The wild extravagance of the madhouse scenes is quite in his manner. I have little doubt that the last scene of the play is by Rowley. The violence of the language and the introduction of the ill-timed comic touches reminds us of 'All 's Lost by Lust'; and the metrical roughness is painfully prominent. There are also occasional traces of Rowley in the opening scenes."

Swinburne evidently holds the same opinion. In his Introduction to the Mermaid Edition of the Middleton plays, he says: "In the underplot of 'A Fair Quarrel,' Rowley's besetting faults of coarseness and quaintness, stiffness and roughness, are so flagrant and obtrusive that we cannot avoid a feeling of regret and irritation at such untimely and inharmonious evidences of his partnership with a part of finer if not sturdier genius." And he says of "The Changeling": "We may assert with fair confidence that the first and last scenes of the play bear the indisputable sign manual of William Rowley. His vigorous and vivid genius, his somewhat hard and curt directness of style and manner, his clear and trenchant power of straightforward presentation or exposition may be traced in every line as plainly as the hand of Middleton must be recognized in the main plot of the tragic action intervening."

Now these opinions are undoubtedly valuable on account of the ability and reputation of the critics; but they are simply opinions, and the student must feel that he should like to know

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, by A. H. Bullen, Introduction.

something more of the grounds upon which they are based before he accepts them as his own.

To do this, however, it is necessary to make a careful study of both authors, and in Rowley's case, such a study is not always possible. His plays have never been collected, and his single tragedy, "All's Lost by Lust," which is of course more valuable than the comedies for the purpose of comparison with the serious plays he wrote with Middleton, is not printed in any available form. Accordingly, opinions concerning the character of this somewhat remarkable partnership have often of necessity been based upon an acquaintance with the work of only one of the partners, and must be somewhat untrustworthy. Indeed we find Ward,<sup>1</sup> careful historian as he is, prefacing his consideration of the Middleton-Rowley plays with the admission that he has read but one play of Rowley's; and it appears that under such circumstances as these, there is abundant room for an investigation which shall attempt to bring out what evidence there is in this matter and collect facts which may serve as a basis for more satisfactory and reliable criticism.

## II.

Our first step will naturally be to determine exactly what plays we have by the two men that we can use as evidence. We have an amply sufficient number of Middleton's; but at the start, even if we have access to all Rowley's plays, we are confronted with a difficulty in the fact that he has left us so few that are certainly and wholly his own. "All's Lost by Lust" and the first three acts of "A Woman Never Vexed" are admittedly his; the last two acts of the latter may possibly have been borrowed from an older play.<sup>2</sup> Besides these, the plays of importance with which he was connected are only: "The Birth of Merlin" and "A Cure for a Cuckold,"<sup>3</sup>—written in collaboration with unknown authors,—in which Rowley's share has never been determined; "The Maid in the Mill," his share in

<sup>1</sup> *The History of English Dramatic Literature*, A. W. Ward, ii. 135.

<sup>2</sup> See Fleay, *Chronicles of the English Drama*, ii. 102.

<sup>3</sup> *The Birth of Merlin, or The Child hath lost a Father*, 4to, 1662, "by William Shakespeare and William Rowley."—*A Cure for a Cuckold*, 4to, 1661. By John Webster and William Rowley.

Rowley's share in these plays has never been disputed; Shakespeare's and Webster's are doubtful. Fleay, *Chronicles*, etc., ii. 99 and 105.

which may be determined with some certainty; and "A Match at Midnight," of which the authorship, although it is ascribed to him alone on the title-page, must now be regarded as doubtful.<sup>1</sup> This is undoubtedly a small amount of material; much of it, too, appears at first to be of a discouragingly uncertain character. But there is no need to despair, for when we have arrived at as great a degree of certainty as possible in regard to Rowley's share in the doubtful plays, and know what we have to depend upon for our testimony, the outlook becomes decidedly more hopeful.

In regard to "The Birth of Merlin" and "A Cure for a Cuckold," as Rowley's collaborators are unknown, it would be impossible for us to define his share in them before we had made that very study of his style in which we wish to use them as evidence. They are not, however, without value to us in our inquiry; for as it is not disputed that Rowley had a considerable share in their composition, the presence in them of episodes, characteristic expressions, and the like, which are found in undoubted Rowley plays, may be admitted to add strength to the probability that such episodes, etc., are characteristic of Rowley, and that when they appear in scenes of the joint plays, they indicate his influence upon those scenes. They can, at least, furnish supplementary evidence.

In the case of "The Maid in the Mill," we are assisted by the fact that Rowley's coadjutor was so well known and strongly individual a man as Fletcher, for whatever may be said of the justice of Mr. Macaulay's conclusions concerning "The Woman Hater," "Philaster," and "A Maid's Tragedy," it must be admitted that he has established beyond a reasonable possibility of doubt that Fletcher's later verse invariably showed a very large proportion of feminine endings and end-stopt lines, a proportion much-exceeding one half,<sup>2</sup> while an examination of the last act of "All's Lost by Lust," 292 lines, shows but seventy-one feminine endings, and throughout the unassisted Rowley plays the number of feminine endings seldom exceeds one in four and usually falls under that proportion. Moreover, most of these have only one extra syllable, while Fletcher's lines commonly have two or even three, and the proportion of run-on lines is

<sup>1</sup> See pages 7-13.

<sup>2</sup> *Francis Beaumont*: G. C. Macaulay.

greater than in Fletcher, *i. e.*, one in four. Now examining "The Maid in the Mill," with these characteristics of the two men in mind, we notice<sup>1</sup> that in I. 1, 2, 3; III. 2, 3; V. 2 (first part) the number of feminine endings greatly exceeds that of the masculine ones and the lines are almost invariably end-stopt, while in II. 1, 2; III. 1; IV. 1, 2, 3 and V. 1, 2 (last part) the proportion of feminine endings never rises above one in four and a large number of lines run on. The effect of the verse is, of course, entirely different in these different scenes, and the conclusion is, I believe, inevitable. We may regard the latter group as Rowley's work.

We come now to "A Match at Midnight," the authorship of which, as has been said, was, until lately, ascribed to Rowley alone, but is now regarded as doubtful.<sup>2</sup> This play is a peculiarly complicated puzzle and requires more attention than its merits seem to warrant; but as every piece of evidence as to Rowley's style is valuable, we cannot afford to omit it.

Evidently Mr. Fleay has bestowed a good deal of thought upon it, for as often as he has had occasion to publish his opinion on its authorship, he has brought forward a different one. In the "Shakespeare Manual," 1876, page 94, he prints it, like every one else, under Rowley's name, dating it "before 1622" and assigning it to the Red Bull. In the "History of the Stage," 1890, he gives it to Rowley aided by Middleton, for the Queen's Revels' Children at Blackfriars, 1603–1609;<sup>3</sup> and in the "Chronicles of the English Drama," to Middleton alone, with the assertion: "'A Match at Midnight' was certainly acted at this time (1607) by the same boys"<sup>4</sup> (the Children of the Revels). It would certainly have been convenient for the student of Middleton and Rowley if Mr. Fleay had given his reasons for these surprising changes of opinion, but he has contented himself with the bare statement and left us to construct a case for him as best we may; and Mr. Bullen, who holds the same opinion as Fleay, has done little better. He says in his

<sup>1</sup> Since making the following division of the play I have noticed that Fleay (*Chrons. etc.*, i. 101) has made the same division. The coincidence certainly goes far to prove the justice of the test.

<sup>2</sup> See Fleay, *Chronicles of the English Drama*, ii. p. 95, and Bullen, *Works of Thomas Middleton*, Introduction, i.

<sup>3</sup> *History of the English Stage*, p. 203.

<sup>4</sup> *Chronicles of the English Drama*, ii. p. 95.

Introduction to Middleton's works only: "I strongly favor Mr. Fleay's view that Rowley merely altered it (*circa* 1622) for a revival, and that the real author was Middleton. It is written very much in the style of Middleton's early comedies of intrigue."

These are, of course, mere statements of opinion. Fortunately, however, it is not difficult to guess at the arguments which would support them. The case is briefly this. It is certain that the published version of the play was brought out a considerable time after November 18, 1620, for as it contains a reference to the battle of Prague fought on that day, it must have been written after the news of it had reached England; indeed, it is likely that it was acted as late as the next year, for there is an allusion (III. 2) to a story book called "Reynard, the Fox," and this probably refers to a new and abridged edition of this work, the oldest extant copy of which is dated 1621, rather than to the old version which appeared in 1481 and would not have been such fashionable reading in Rowley's day. Nevertheless, in spite of these marks of date, the title page of the quarto assigns the play to the Children of the Revels. Now although it is true that there was a company acting at the Red Bull about that time which had been licensed under the name "Children of the Revels,"<sup>1</sup> yet, being a company of men, not boy actors, it was commonly known as the *Company*, not the *Children*, of the Revels, and the company of boys usually known by that name had been disbanded long before 1620. Moreover, there is no evidence that Rowley ever wrote for any company so called, and "A Match at Midnight" is very unlike the plays he was writing in the years immediately following the battle of Prague, that is to say, during the period of "The Changeling," "The Spanish Gipsy," "All's Lost by Lust" and "The Maid in the Mill." These are all romantic plays, and "A Match at Midnight" belongs to the class of the comedies of manners.

These are the difficulties that confront the supporters of the

<sup>1</sup> *History of the English Stage*, Fleay, p. 270. The privy seal of the company, July 8, 1622, is reprinted in *History of the English Dramatic Poets*, by J. Payne Collier. The names of three of the members appear in the *Bill of Complaint versus Baskerville*, filed May 23, 1623 (*Transactions of the N. Sh. Society*, 1885); evidently these plaintiffs were not boys.

Rowley authorship theory. On the other hand, Middleton in 1607 was writing regularly for the boys' company which was commonly known as the Children of the Revels plays of the same general character as "A Match at Midnight." They were such plays as "A Trick to Catch the Old One," "Your Five Gallants," and "A Mad World, my Masters," all distinctly comedies of manners, written mainly in prose, light, witty, with a vein of caustic satire running through them, each dissecting and holding up to ridicule some one phase of the society of the time, and their plots turning upon an amusing misunderstanding which is always patent to the audience, but whose clearing up for the *dramatis personæ* forms an effective *dénouement* for the play.

Now the plot of "A Match at Midnight" is strikingly similar to the plots of these comedies. It centres about the miser, Bloodhound, who is scheming to marry a rich widow, and who, it appears, is unhappy in his children. He wishes to marry his daughter Moll to a rich informer, but she falls in love instead with a penniless ancient whom her father has cheated out of his estates, and she runs away with him at midnight, carrying the title-deeds of the stolen property. Tim, the younger son, is foolish, though thrifty, and gets himself well cheated in a tavern the same night, while Alexander, the elder, who is a spendthrift, becomes his father's rival with the widow, and he and the widow's servant arrange to frighten Bloodhound by tales of a fictitious Sir Nicholas Nemo, who is supposed to be in hot pursuit of the lady, get him to meet at midnight a courtesan whom he supposes to be the widow, carry her home out of the clutches of her ruffian pursuers, and order the wedding feast for the next morning. Meanwhile Alexander is to win the true widow during the night, marry her, and bring her to a feast which shall cost him nothing. Everything is done as planned. But at the end master Alexander finds that he has been cheated as neatly as his father; for the widow's servant turns out to be her husband in disguise, and carries her off from them all.

All this is certainly very much like the plots of the Middleton comedies; indeed, the best of the play, the schemes of Bloodhound to get the rich widow away from the imaginary Sir Nicholas Nemo, and the final cozening of all the suitors, seems to have been directly modeled upon that part of "A Trick to Catch the Old One," in which Hoard and Lucre scheme to

capture another supposedly rich widow, and are equally well cozened for their pains. Mr. Fleay evidently thinks that the similarity is an indication of identity of authorship and not of imitation. Moreover the dialogue is full of references to the law and lawyers, a well-known Middleton trait, and it contains a surprising number of puns and quips that appear in almost identical form in the Middleton comedies written for the child-players. Some of these were doubtless common property, not peculiar to Middleton, but some are unusual, and at least the number of the coincidences is striking.

ALEXANDER: "You will eat nothing an you will but a poached spider and wash it down with sirup of toads." — *A Match at Midnight*, I. 1.

WHITE PAWN: "Your food shall be blackberries, and upon gaudy days a pickled spider." — *A Game at Chess*, III. 2.

TANGLE: "Very sirup of toads and preserved adders." — *The Phænix*, IV. 1.

SIM: "I know my master will make dice of them [the chandler's bones]; then 't is but letting Master Alexander take them to the temple," etc. — *A Match at Midnight*, I. 3.

TANGLE: "Make dice of my bones and let my councillor's son play away his father's money with them." — *The Phænix*, IV. 1.

BLOODHOUND: "Mark that!"

ALEXANDER: "Can you lend me a mark upon that ring, sir?" — *A Match at Midnight*, I. 1.

TAILBY: "Mark! Why I think you've left me ne'er a penny, sir." — *Your Five Gallants*, III. 2.

It is doubtless upon such facts as these,—namely, the similarity of "*A Match at Midnight*" to many plays of Middleton and its dissimilarity to any of Rowley's, the repetitions in it of many phrases found in Middleton's comedies, and the possible explanation the Middleton authorship affords of the ascription of the play to the Children of the Revels,—that Fleay has founded his latest theory, which seems to be that the play was written by Middleton about 1607, along with his other comedies of manners for the Children of the Revels, and having been partially forgotten, was revised by Rowley shortly after 1620 for the use of one of the companies with which he was connected about that time,—the Prince's or the Lady Elizabeth's.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The World Tost at Tennis*: — By the Prince, his Servants, of 1620. The mask celebrated the nuptials of Charles, Lord Howard, and Lady Mary

Then when it came to be published in 1633, it was brought out under the name of the reviser instead of the original author, but was ascribed, not to the company for whom the revision was made, but to the players of the earlier revision.

As we have seen, there are strong points in favor of this theory; but it does not by any means do away with all the difficulties in the case. In the first place, although a student of our early dramas is prepared to ascribe almost any degree of eccentricity to their publishers, the particular line of action that we are compelled to assume here is certainly unparalleled. Why a publisher should have printed the revised version of a play and ascribed it to the reviser, at the same time setting it down to a company that had gone out of existence some years before the revision was made, and do all this not much more than ten years after the date of the revision, when it must have been fairly fresh in his own mind and in that of his public, is, one must own, hard to explain. Moreover no one has as yet discovered in the play any marks of revision such as Fleay has noted in "*A Woman Never Vexed*."<sup>1</sup> Yet this revision, if one was made, must have introduced considerable alterations in the text, for the play bears many marks of Rowley's handiwork. The situations of Moll, Earlack, and the Ancient strikingly resemble situations in "*A Fair Quarrel*" (I. underplot),<sup>2</sup> and, more particularly, in "*A Woman Never Vexed*." In all these plays we have a young girl presented by her father to rich but clownish suitors whom she mocks and discards for a poorer but younger and handsomer man, whereupon the discarded suitors continue to make sport for the audience; in no case does the girl's mother appear, a character never introduced by Rowley, but much affected by Middleton, who was particularly successful with middle-aged woman (q. v. Maudlin in "*A Chaste Maid at Cheap-side*," and the old mother in "*Women Beware Women*"). In III. 2, Moll spits at her lover, a curious incident paralleled in "*A Fair Quarrel*," III. 2, and in "*All's Lost by Lust*," II. 1, but not in any unassisted play of Middleton's. Moreover,

Effingham, married April 22, 1620. "Upon the Sunday after, being the 4th of January, 1623, by the *Queene of Bohemia's Company, The Changeling*," etc. Note of such plays as one acted at court in 1623 and 1624.

<sup>1</sup> See *Chronicles of the English Drama*, Fleay, ii. 103.

<sup>2</sup> See page 36.

although there is very little verse in "A Match at Midnight," less than is usual in Middleton's comedies, what there is bears the Rowley stamp. For instance:—

ANCIENT: "The wise man  
Derides and jeers you, as puffs really of  
Virtue and valor (those fair twins  
That are born, breathe, die together!) then  
You 'll no more be called butterflies, but men." — II. 3.

Set beside these lines, the roughest verse that can be found in the plays that Middleton wrote for the Children of the Revels flows smoothly as a meadow brook; but Rowley's rhythm is notoriously rough. Compare a bit of verse from "A Woman Never Vexed":—

STEPHEN: "The fortunes of the dice you see."  
WIDOW: "They are the only Wizards, I confess,  
The only fortune-tellers; but he that goes  
To seek his fortune from them must never hope  
To have a good destiny allotted him.  
Yet it is not the course that I dislike in thee,  
But that thou canst not supply that course." — II. 1.

In both the masculine endings, the run-on lines, the inversions in other feet than the first and that following the cæsura, and the carelessness about the number of unaccented syllables, are evidences of Rowley's hand. Middleton's verse shows quite different qualities.<sup>1</sup>

Now all these considerations — the difficulty of explaining, on the Middleton authorship hypothesis, the ascription of the play to Rowley, and also to the Children of the Revels; the similarity of many scenes in this play to scenes found in Rowley's other work, and of the verse to Rowley's usual rhythm, and also the absence of any mark of the revision which must, according to this hypothesis, have been made for the production after 1622 — lead us to feel that the difficulties in assuming Middleton's authorship balance those that the assumption removes. Moreover, one cannot get rid of the feeling that this play is more like a clumsy imitation of the Middleton comedies than it is like the real thing. It has little of the *verve* and lively repartee of

<sup>1</sup> For the characteristics of the verse of Middleton and Rowley, see below, pages 25-28.

"A Mad World, My Masters," and "A Trick to Catch the Old One;" the plot is more complex than is Middleton's fashion; the satire lacks subtlety and the wit an edge; there is but one scene of any great excellence in execution, i. e. the teasing of Moll by her brother and the Ancient, III. 2, and that is successful rather from its good-humored drollery than from its sharpness of wit. These qualities, as we shall see when we come to consider the style of the two men, indicate Rowley rather than Middleton; and altogether it seems to me that unless some definite proof of Middleton's authorship is advanced, we have not sufficient reason to justify us in disregarding the assertion of the publisher, and removing "A Match at Midnight" from the list of the Rowley plays.

In either case, however, whether the reader chooses to regard this play as Middleton's for the Children of the Revels, revised later by Rowley, with copious emendations, for another company, or prefers to consider it a close imitation of Middleton written wholly by Rowley, for the *Company*, licensed *Children*, of the Revels, when he was changing from the Prince's to the Lady Elizabeth's, and so for the time was unattached to any company, he must ascribe to Rowley a considerable share in the published version; and it is certainly justifiable to assert that those characteristics that are found here and in other plays with which Rowley was connected, but not in plays in which Middleton worked with him, are due to his coöperation, and belong to him rather than to Middleton. In other words, we may safely use this play as we may use "The Birth of Merlin" and "A Cure for a Cuckold." We may admit that it is capable of furnishing corroboratory evidence in cases where a probability of Rowley's authorship has been established by the verse test or by reference to characteristics of "All's Lost by Lust," of the first three acts of "A Woman Never Vexed," and of acts II. 12; III. 1; IV. 1, 2, 3; and V. 1, 2 (last part) of "The Maid in the Mill."

### III.

There is, then, a reasonable amount of material for such a study of both Rowley and Middleton as seemed necessary before we could make any comparison between the style of the two men or pronounce any judgment upon their respective shares in the joint plays, and this study will, I believe, show that there

is a considerable difference between their styles, both in comedy and in tragedy.

Rowley's style of humor hardly needs other illustration than a reference to the character of his best comedy with its exaggerated, delightfully absurd conception of the woman oppressed by a superabundance of blessings. It is tinged throughout by whimsicality, verging on the burlesque, in other words, by exaggeration, and the fun is somewhat broad. The conception of the scold, Mistress Foster, reminds us in its coarseness and *naïveté* of the gossips in such old comedies as "Gammer Gurton's Needle," where the method was frankly that of exaggeration; and in Rowley's, as in these old plays, this method often leads to buffoonery and horse-play. It does so in the foolery of Jaques, the country clown, and in the atrocious underplots of "The Birth of Merlin" and "A Cure for A Cuckold." On the other hand, however, it is often successful. Mr. Bullen speaks of the "rich vein of humor Rowley could sometimes discover." His best-drawn characters, like the widow who longs for vexing, and the scold who prays for peace, are irresistibly droll; and even in the worst scenes there is a heartiness and good humor which is somehow infectious. They do not call forth the chuckle of intellectual appreciation, it is true; but they have often raised a hearty laugh. In his attempts at verbal cleverness, however, Rowley makes absolute failures. An example of such an attempt may be found in the repartees of Jane and her lovers ("A Woman Never Vexed," III. 1), with their wearisome reiteration of puns on "observation" and "experience;" another in the jokes of Lothario and Jaques. Lothario enters with a halter, crying, "Whichever way the day goes, I'm sure this is my way," and meeting Jaques, he begs him to hang him. "Hum," muses Jaques, "Well, I will hang —, but my conscience bears me witness! 't is not for any good will I bear unto thee, nor for any wrong I know thou hast committed; but innocently, for thy lands, thy leases, thy clothes, and thy money." ("All's Lost by Lust," V. 2.) Undoubtedly, as in "A Match at Midnight," the wit lacks an edge; the puns are fantastic, the jokes clumsy, and the exaggeration deprives the scenes of that semblance of reality which is the necessary condition of effective satire. Rowley would have been wise if he had always, as in his best work, depended, not upon the cleverness of the dialogue, but upon a droll conception and vigorous action.

Turning to his tragedy, we find very similar characteristics. "All's Lost by Lust" is little known and difficult of access, but an idea of its character may be given in short space. It is founded upon the old story, popular since the earliest days of Spanish ballad literature, of *Il Re Roderigo*, last Christian king of Spain, who brought destruction upon himself and his kingdom through his love for the maiden Jacinta. He sends her father away to command against the Moors and takes advantage of the old man's absence to gratify his passion. The girl, who is unswervingly virtuous, profits by her jailor's drunken sleep to escape, and fleeing to her father, urges him to avenge her. Being a loyal subject, the general can with difficulty be brought to believe her story; but when he is at last convinced of his dishonor, his loyalty gives way, and he leagues with the Moors, whom he has just conquered, to drive the guilty king from Spain. The Moor, however, once in possession, turns against his benefactor, and puts him to the sword after forcing him by a stratagem to kill his daughter, who has rejected the advances of the new king as she had those of Roderigo before. In connection with this story an underplot is developed telling of the sad fate of a country girl, Margareta, who is wooed by a young nobleman by the name of Antonio, and persuaded to a secret marriage. He soon tires of her, and denying the marriage, weds a well-born lady. The poor girl, half maddened by her wrongs, forms the plan of enticing her faithless husband to her at night and strangling him in his bed. The plan is carried out with the assistance of a clownish brother, who makes some sport for the audience; but in accordance with a detestable plot, another is substituted for the husband, and Margareta, going to denounce herself to the judges for Antonio's murder, is met by her husband himself, who approaches with his new bride. She is not unavenged, however, for he has been wounded to death by the hand of her father, and he dies before her eyes, confessing with penitence the injury he has done her. The two women, both of whom love the man in spite of his crimes, stab themselves and fall dead beside his body.

Both these plots furnish great dramatic opportunities. They are, however, worked out with entire absence of subtlety. The motives of the characters are much simpler than is natural; they seem each to be moved by but one passion, of which they are

somewhat conventionalized and extravagant exponents, and the passions are the universal ones of love, revenge, honor. Rowley makes no attempt to analyze conflicting emotions, or to exhibit both the strength and the weakness of his characters ; the study of the subtler motives of human action had no attractions for him. Indeed the simplicity of motives in this play is almost brutal, and the directness of their influence upon the action removes it from the domain of reality : life is more complicated than Rowley shows it to be. At the same time, however, the very exaggeration makes possible a grandeur of effect which is attainable by realistic work only when it is of the highest quality. If the characters are little more than types, at least they are built upon great patterns. For instance, in Jacinta, in whom the dramatist seems to have intended us to note a resemblance to the noble Roman woman, —

“There have been ravishers ; remember Tarquin.”

“There ‘ve been chaste ladies ; remember Lucrece,” —

we see a truly exalted picture of heroic chastity. Her character lacks sweetness, and she sometimes repels us by the violence of her vituperation and the tiger-like fierceness of her hatred for the Moor ; but it cannot be denied that hers is a fine and heroic figure in which an actress might see great histrionic possibilities, and whose conception and consistent presentation shows in the dramatist the power of imagination, the respect for human nature, and belief in the possibility of virtue that are among the essential parts of the outfit of a writer of tragedy. Margaretta, too, if less heroic, is equally virtuous. At first we see in her only the youthful gentleness and purity which, joined with the extravagant infatuation of Antonio, make a pretty and romantic little idyl of the beginning of their loves ; but we soon find that she too has something of the tiger in her. She is as completely swayed by love as is Juliet, and the passion has the same strengthening effect upon her character. Betrayed, the gentle, unsuspecting girl becomes a murderer and exults in her crime. With the calmness of an avenging angel she bids Fidella tighten the string about the throat of her faithless husband ; and then, when the maid begs her to fly, she cries scornfully :—

“Conceal the deed ? e’ en to the bended brow

Of the stern judge, I ’ll speak and call for justice ;

Proud of my glorious vengeance, I will smile  
Upon my dreadful executioner.  
'T was that was first enacted in my breast.  
She should not dare to kill that dares not die."

This is distinctly fine ; these women of Rowley's show a nobility of character, an exalted virtue, and a possibility of heroism that is Shakespearian. Almost equally fine, too, is the figure of the old General Julianus. Early in the play we seem to see in him only the impersonation of pride and loyalty ; but at the end, when both have been broken down, as with bloody sockets he gropes his way upon the stage for the last time, holding his daughter's hand and crying to his torturers, —

" 'T is night with me forever ; where 's this tyrant ? —  
I 'll borrow eyes to guide me of my child,  
And her I 'll lend a tongue to curse thee with,"

he is still a noble and dignified, although profoundly pitiful figure, nobly conceived and presented with strength and feeling.

In the power to imagine and to draw such figures as these lies Rowley's strongest claim to greatness. To be sure, they are romantic, and indeed Rowley shows in all his serious work a tendency to romanticism which finds a parallel in the fantastic drollery of his comedies. Hazlitt says of him that he " appears to have excelled in describing a certain amiable quietness of disposition and disinterested tone of morality carried almost to a paradoxical excess as in his ' Fair Quarrel ' and the comedy of ' A Woman Never Vexed ; ' " and we have seen that the same romantic glamour hangs about the characters of Jacinta, Margareta and Julianus ; it is evident, too, in " The Spanish Gipsy," and perhaps even more clearly in " A Cure for a Cuckold," where the fantastic story, turning upon a lady's command to her lover bidding him kill his best friend, gives excellent opportunity for the display of over-fine-spun notions. Evidently our dramatist troubled himself very little to study human nature or to reproduce it with moderation and truth. He wished to exhibit through his fictitious men and women the noble sentiments and virtues of humanity, and he wished his characters to win the sympathy of the audience and to hold it to the end of the play. To accomplish these aims he used the easy method of exaggeration, and

we must admit that in this method undoubtedly lies the strength as well as the weakness of his work. Here, too, as will appear, lies the chief cause of the difference between his work and Middleton's.

If he had confined his exaggeration to his conception, to a romantic view of life and human nature, all would have been well ; but unfortunately it is equally apparent in his execution, and here it is a source of weakness. His characters say too much ; they foam at the mouth, beat each other and hurl invectives with astonishing freedom. The fierceness of Mistress Foster's language may help to carry out the humorous conception of her character, but the same cannot be said of the invectives in "All's Lost by Lust :" —

JACINTA : "Out, shame of woman, thou the falsest art,  
Be lost forever looking on my face. . . .  
Out, hag ! " — I. i.

JACINTA : "Art officer of hell ?  
Thou jailor to the devil, fleshly fiend." — III. i.

JACINTA : "O that I could spit out the spider's bladder,  
Or the toad's entrails into them ! " — III. i.

JACINTA : "O that their eyes were worth the plucking out." — *Idem.*

RODERIGO : "Dog, hell-hound, thou shalt be my foot-ball, slave." — *Idem.*

Here exaggeration becomes absurdity.

Rowley's weakness in execution is further shown by his incapacity for sustained work of a high order. When Julianus ends a speech which is in many ways admirable by the blatant couplet : —

"But my affliction teaches me too late,  
On, bloody revenger, finish up my fate,"

we smile instead of weeping ; King Roderigo slashes and rants among the ghosts in the vault in what we recognize as King Cambyses' vein ; Antonio, dying with the doggerel upon his lips, —

"With honor I got honor ; thus my sin thrives ;  
Thus falls the wretched husband of two wives,"

is droll without intending it ; and the same inadequacy of expression is noticeable in some of the serious parts of "A Woman Never vexed."

Equally noticeable, too, is a slovenly confusion of plot, an inartistic piling up of incidents and interests, that appears to be characteristic of Rowley. For instance, in "All's Lost by Lust," we find a serious fault of construction in the character and the over-elaboration of the underplot. To fulfill its proper function, an underplot should be simple and strictly subordinated to the main plot; and as the chief purpose in introducing it is to afford relief from the severe strain of sustained tragedy, it should furnish frequent opportunity for the introduction of comic scenes. Now instead of such a series of lightly handled scenes, we have in "All's Lost by Lust" another tragedy developed side by side with the main action and almost equaling it in intensity of passion, crowded with characters and incidents, and offering as relief to the tragic tension only the clumsy drolgeries of a country clown which have no vital connection with the story. Its only merit as an underplot is the relief the open-air freshness of its early scenes affords to the close atmosphere of the scenes between Jacinta and her tempters. Except for this, even regarded as a play by itself, apart from its definite function, it is not well planned. Too great importance is given to the character of the second bride, Dionysia, who plays a merely adventitious part in the story, and as a tragedy it has the serious blot of a catastrophe brought about by accidental means, springing from no necessity inherent in the action. In his treatment of the main plot, also, Rowley has shown lack of skill. He has followed the original story closely in its principal features, but he has allowed the theme to be obscured, so that at the moment of the catastrophe,<sup>1</sup> which is what has been happily named "a solution by massacre," it is only by an effort of will that we refer it to the crime of Roderigo, and not merely to the secondary cause, the treason of Julianus; the prominence given to the passion of the Moor has reduced the crime from which the tragedy springs to the rank of an episode in the persecution of the unhappy Jacinta, and consequently the final effect is confused and weak.

In Rowley as a dramatist, then, we recognize as characteristic a crude simplicity in the treatment of characters and situations, leading in comedy to whimsical burlesque which only too often degenerates into buffoonery and horseplay, and in more serious

<sup>1</sup> See above, page 17.

work to romantic exaggeration ; we recognize a great weakness in execution, shown in a tendency to blatancy, an incapacity for sustained work, and also in serious defects in construction ;—all this offset in part, however, by the power springing from imagination, seriousness of purpose, and the deep respect for human nature, and enabling him to create noble, consistent and unwaveringly virtuous characters, who can win and keep the sympathy of the audience.

Middleton's qualities are, as has been suggested, entirely different. In the first place, his comic work is of an entirely different quality ; it has different merits, different faults. In contrast to Rowley's bluntness and extravagance it is remarkable for the clever *double entendre* of the lines, the biting satire that seasons it, and the absence of exaggeration in conception and in the working out of the dialogue,—in other words, its realism ; it constantly appeals to our intellect, our good sense and knowledge of life. The first scene of “A Chaste Maid in Cheapside” is so excellent an example of the dramatist's methods that it is worth while to quote a few speeches.

Touchwood Junior, intending to steal away the daughter of Yellowhammer, the goldsmith, goes to buy the ring of his prospective father-in-law, who is plotting to give the girl to another man.

YELLOWHAMMER : “ What 's your posy, now, sir ? ”

TOUCHWOOD, JUN. : “ Mass, that 's true : posy ? i' faith e'en this, sir : —

Love that 's wise  
Blinds parent's eyes.”

YELLOWHAMMER : “ How, how ? If I may speak without offense, sir, I hold my life ” —

TOUCHWOOD, JUN. : “ What, sir ? ”

YELLOWHAMMER : “ Go to, — you 'll pardon me ? ”

TOUCHWOOD, JUN. : “ Pardon you ? Ay, sir.”

YELLOWHAMMER : “ Will you, i' faith ? ”

TOUCHWOOD, JUN. : “ Yes, faith, I will.”

YELLOWHAMMER : “ You 'll steal away some man's daughter ; am I near you ?

Do you turn aside ? You gentlemen are mad wags.

I wonder things can be so warily carried

And parents blinded so ; but they 're served right

That have two eyes and were so dull a' sight.”

It would be impossible to match this scene in Rowley's plays. Scenes equally remarkable, however, for realistic treatment, for self-restraint, satire, and power of characterization abound in Middleton's comedies. At times, it is true, especially in his early period, we find instances—as in "The Phoenix," I. 4—where over-refined subtlety of wit has resulted in artificiality, the off-set of Rowley's buffoonery; but such instances are rare, and over against them we may set innumerable scenes where keenness of insight into human nature, joined with absolute accuracy of expression and a fertile invention, have produced some of the best comic work in English literature. A bit of one such scene has already been quoted; another may be found in the episode of the tricksters tricked in "A Mad World, my Masters," where the dramatist's self-restraint is particularly remarkable only because such incidents as the mystification of the Constable offer especial temptations to exaggeration and burlesque; another still, is the scene where the gossips dispute for precedence ("A Chaste Maid in Cheapside," II. 4), where the action is commonplace and the scene depends for its success entirely upon skill in characterization; another in the scene mentioned below, the game of chess between Livia and the old mother in "Women Beware Women."

Evidently, then, we have in Middleton a comic writer whose work, depending upon the clever presentation of actual absurdities rather than upon exaggeration and whimsical invention, and distinguished as it is by remarkable technical skill, differs essentially both in character and in value from the comedy of his colleague, Rowley.

In tragedy the difference between the two men is not less marked than it is in comedy. Perhaps the character of this difference cannot be brought out better than by a comparison of Middleton's play, "Women Beware Women," with Rowley's tragedy which we considered above; for the plays have the same motive, and therefore show the two men working independently along the same lines.

To begin with, "Women Beware Women" is superior to "All's Lost by Lust" in construction. Although here, too, the fault may be found that the catastrophe, sweeping enough to befit a tragedy of blood, is by no means inevitable, still the theme is clearly evident throughout, proportion is well pre-

served, and there are no unrelated episodes,—every scene is necessary to the development of the plot. This cannot be said of "All's Lost by Lust." Accordingly, the movement of Middleton's play is swifter and the effect more striking. The underplot, too, is better. The objection made to the story of Margaretta, that its interest distracts the attention from the main plot, cannot be made here: and although its subordination appears to be due less to the intention of the dramatist, who has lavished upon it some of his finest lines, than to the inherent repulsiveness of the story, which repeats the theme of the main plot as Rowley's does, yet it is at least simpler in movement and more skillfully connected with the main story than is Rowley's underplot, and it has the merit of filling the stage with people at such convenient seasons as the banquet and the wedding festival. It seems to have been designed with some reference to the main plot, and supplements it to some extent; it is therefore better planned as an underplot than Rowley's. It fails to give comic relief, it is true; but this is less important, for the story of Bianca itself affords opportunity for one of Middleton's best bits of comedy, the scene of the game of chess between Livia and the old mother, which is so admirable for the *double entendre* of the lines and their subtle suggestiveness that one questions whether its success may not have suggested to Middleton the possibility of utilizing the idea for his great satire of 1624. Nothing comparable to this is offered by the Jacinta story, which is sombre throughout, except for the waking of the drunken jailor by the king's kicks after Jacinta's escape. The fellow takes his master for his former captive, and yells out, "I'll tell the king and he'll tickle you for this." "I'll tickle you for this," repeats the king grimly, kicking him again. There is always a savage humor in such a swift turn of the tables upon a villain; but it is too slight a bit of comedy to atone for lack of gayety in the underplot.

There is a similar difference in style throughout the two plays. As we have seen, for drollery and horse-play, Middleton gives us wit and satire; likewise for the loud rant of Roderigo and the women's ill-sustained outbursts of passion he gives us self-restrained, dignified dialogue and the noble eloquence of Leantio and the Cardinal;<sup>1</sup> and for romantic types, living men

<sup>1</sup> See *Women Beware Women*, III. 2; IV. 1.

and women who are not by any means slaves to one motive, but who, if we once admit in man a predisposition to evil, are drawn with an absolute fidelity to nature, an accuracy of detail and observation that make them living realities rather than mere creations of fancy. Note, for example, the delicate shades of characterization in the first scene of the third act, when Leantio, returning home, is made aware of his misfortune. The young husband's mystification when he sees the sudden change in his once foolishly fond bride, and his overdone acting of surprise for the benefit of the Duke's messenger ; the girl's saucy smartness and the shameless, clever way in which she turns aside his inquiries ; the old mother's gossipy delight in recalling all the circumstances of the Duke's first view of her daughter-in-law, — here are three characters drawn for us in the space of three or four pages, with as great truth of observation, as much fitness of setting and subtlety of motive as could be desired by any modern realist.

But in the predisposition to evil which appears in them all alike — excepting perhaps the old mother, who soon drops out, lies the weakness of the play ; and here we find almost the only important point in which Middleton was inferior to his colleague. In "Women Beware Women," characters that at first win our sympathy soon lose it by reason of the pitiful, more than human, weakness they show under temptation ; and their yielding is followed by a saucy impudence in wickedness, a meanness of spirit of which no hint was given at their introduction, and which is to be explained only by the doctrine of innate depravity needing nothing but opportunity to display itself. They become despicable, and finally move us to neither pity nor hate ; so that, in spite of the vividness with which the scenes are set before us, and the exquisite irony that underlies them, we find that our interest in them fails us long before we reach the catastrophe, and we have no feeling of emotion, unless it be one of relief, when the whole infamous band are deservedly done to death in the last act. In "All's Lost by Lust," on the contrary, the *dramatis personæ* inspire intense sympathy in the reader, and merely by reason of this one characteristic, Rowley's tragedy would probably make a more popular acting play than "Women Beware Women," infinitely superior as the latter undoubtedly is in literary merits.

Middleton, then, we see, found satire more congenial than burlesque, and in his view of life was the reverse of romantic. He showed a far closer study of life than Rowley, and a keener insight into motives ; he drew his characters from nature, and, carefully refraining from exaggeration, filled in his sketches with all the unsparing accuracy of the realist. Rowley's superior in matters of technique, he could construct a plot more intelligently, showed himself better equal to the demands of the situations he created, whether comic or tragic, and, never blatant, restrained the passions of his personages within due bounds of propriety. With many excellences, however, we see that owing to his low view of human nature, he was inferior to Rowley in power to win sympathy for his characters, to hold the reader's interest in them to the last. We find that his serious plays decrease in interest towards the end,—this is as true of "More Dissemblers Besides Women," whose characters, though they are not, with the exception of Lactantio, wicked, are wholly devoid of dignity, as it is of "Women Beware Women,"—and that no one of them has that romantic charm that distinguishes Rowley's best work.

Evidently the differences between Middleton and Rowley in style and temper are sufficiently marked to be of great value to us in our attempt to fix the shares of the two men in the joint plays, but there is still another difference between them which is yet more striking, namely, that in the construction of the verse. To bring this out, it is only necessary to pursue the same method that has already been followed in determining other characteristics of their respective styles ; that is, to compare unassisted Middleton plays with unassisted plays of Rowley.

The Middleton plays most suitable for this purpose are naturally those that belong to the period most nearly coincident with the Middleton-Rowley partnership ; that is to say, the class of plays represented by "Women Beware Women," "More Dissemblers Besides Women," and "A Game of Chess." The comedies written by him for the child-players, as they were almost all brought out more than ten years earlier than "A Fair Quarrel," cannot properly be held to furnish examples of Middleton's versification at the time of his coöperation with Rowley ; and as there is plenty of more suitable material they will not be considered here.

Examining the verse of the later group, we find that it is usually smooth and flows easily. It is true that the lines vary in number of syllables and that Middleton shifts the accent with considerable freedom ; but the extra syllables commonly come at the ends of the lines, sometimes before the cæsura, and the inversions or irregularities are almost invariably confined to the first foot and the foot after the cæsura. The character of his verse appears in the short speech of Livia to Bianca :—

LIVIA : “ I heard you were alone, and t’ had appeared  
An ill condition in me, though I knew you not  
Nor ever saw you — yet humanity  
Thinks every care her own — t’ have kept your company  
Here from you and left you all solitary :  
I rather ventur’d upon boldness then,  
As the least fault, and wished your presence here ;  
A thing most happily motioned of that gentleman,  
Whom I request you, for his care and pity,  
To honor and reward with your acquaintance ;  
A gentleman that ladies’ rights stands for,  
That’s his profession.” — *Women Beware Women*, II. 2.

These verses run smoothly ; the alternation of the light and heavy syllables is regular except in lines 7 and 9, where the first foot is inverted, and the extra syllables come at the ends of lines 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10.

Again, in “ More Dissemblers Besides Women : ” —

THE DUCHESS : “ O there’s no art like a religious cunning,  
It carries away all things smooth before it !  
How subtly has his wit dealt with the lords,  
To fetch in their persuasions to a business  
That stands in need of none, yields of itself,  
As most we women do when we seem farthest.” — IV. 2.

In “ A Game at Chess : ” —

BLACK QUEEN’S PAWN : “ He’s a gentleman  
Most wishfully compos’d ; honour grows on him,  
And wealth piled up for him ; has youth enough, too,  
And yet in the sobriety of his countenance  
Grave as a tetrarch, which is gracious  
I’ th’ eye of modest pleasure. Where’s the emptiness ?  
What can you more request ? ” — III. 2.

It will be noticed that the characteristics here are the same as in

the first citation, and the curious reader will find other examples in abundance merely by opening his Middleton at any of the plays written at this period. Some interesting illustrations will be found in the colloquy of the Pawns of the Black Bishop and the White Queen, "A Game at Chess," II. 1; of the old mother and Bianca, "Women Beware Women," III. 1; and of Leantio and Livia, *idem*, III. 2. He will notice that throughout these plays while the verse lacks the sensuous melody of Dekker's lines, it has a vibrant quality, an ease and elasticity, that fit it to be the instrument of a versatile, polished and ready writer.

Now Rowley's rhythm produces an entirely different effect. We find that, far from confining his inversions to the first foot and the foot after the cæsura, he very frequently inverts his second and last feet, and that he shows great freedom in the use of unaccented syllables within the line. These licenses make his verse exceedingly rough. Examples are not far to seek. Old Foster in "A Woman Never Vexed," I. 1, speaking of his reckless brother, says :—

"Twice have I raised  
His decayed fortunes to a fair estate ;  
But with as fruitless charity as if I had thrown  
My safe-landed substance back into the sea ;  
Or dress in pity some corrupted jade,  
And he should kick me for my courtesy.  
I am sure you cannot but hear what quicksands  
He finds out ; as dice, cards, pigeon-holds,  
And which is worse, should I not restrain it,  
He 'd make my state his prodigality."<sup>1</sup>

The difference between this verse and the citations from Middleton is at once apparent. Notice the irregularity of the second foot in lines 2 and 4, the length of its first syllable, the extra syllable after the third foot in line 3; the omission of the last

<sup>1</sup> The characteristics cited as Rowley's distinguish all the acts of *All's Lost by Lust* and the first three acts of *A Woman Never Vexed*. They are also found in *The Travails of Three English Brothers*, 1607, sc. 10, the verse of which, as will appear to any reader, differs radically from that of Day and Wilson, and is therefore distinguishable as belonging to their third collaborator, and in *The Maid in the Mill*, see above, page 7. Citations from all these plays would occupy much space, and as readers may verify the conclusions reached by reference to scenes chosen at random from any of these plays, such verification will be left to their curiosity.

syllable of the last foot in line 7, and the omission of the first syllable of the following line; also, in line 10, the so-called French arrangement of the accent, i. e. a syllable omitted in the third foot is atoned for by the addition of a syllable at the end, making the number of syllables in the line ten, the regular number. Middleton seldom tampers with his metrical scheme in this manner, but in Rowley's verse lines admissible in neither French nor English poetry occur frequently.

"And feathered ignorance thus our Poets does flight." — *All's Lost by Lust.* Prologue.

"His owne proper glory, for such weak eyes see." — *Idem*, IV.

"For thou knowest what shall become of my poor Jacinta." — *Idem*, V.

Similar lines could, of course, be found in Middleton, as in almost any writer of blank verse, but they are rare, while with Rowley they are so common that his rough rhythm has become notorious.

Moreover, it will be noticed that but one of the ten lines of this citation has an extra syllable at the end, whereas in the speech of Livia, 12 lines, there are six such feminine endings, and of these three have two extra syllables. From this fact alone it might be suspected that the two men belonged to different schools of verse, and the suspicion is confirmed by further reading. We find that although Middleton did not use feminine endings and end-stopt lines as freely as Fletcher did, yet he used them freely enough to be regarded as belonging to the same school. In "A Game at Chess" the proportion of run-on lines is one in five: that of feminine endings is approximately one in two, and many of them are double or triple. This prominence of feminine endings, too, is evidently intentional, for, like Fletcher, Middleton constantly adds "Sir," "Madam," "my Lord," to an already complete line: —

WHITE KING: "Fear? You were never guilty of an injury  
To goodness but in that."

WHITE QUEEN: "It stayed not with me, sir."

WHITE KING: "It was too much if it usurped a thought.  
Place a strong guard there."

WHITE QUEEN: "Confidence is set, sir." — IV. 4.

Now, as we have seen when comparing Rowley's verse with Fletcher's in the study of "The Maid in the Mill," Rowley

belongs metrically to the older school of dramatists. His proportion of feminine endings is generally less than one in four,<sup>1</sup> a very considerable difference from Middleton's habit of one in two, very few of them are double, and his run-on lines are also usually one in four. And although in the latter point the difference between his habit and Middleton's does not from the count seem very marked, in reality Middleton's verse has much more of the end-stopt effect than Rowley's, owing to a habit of his of breaking successive run-on lines by regular cæsuras.<sup>2</sup> The effect of a number of such verses differs little from that of a block of end-stopt lines, and they are very numerous in Middleton, whereas, if they are found in Rowley, they are unusual phenomena.

These differences between the styles of Middleton and Rowley as well in the construction of the verse as in quality of wit, conception of life and human character, and dramatic technique, are certainly sufficiently great to make it possible to enter upon an inquiry into the respective shares of the two dramatists in their joint plays with some prospect of success; and although much of this work must be done by metrical tests, a method of criticism which has justly been regarded with some suspicion, yet in these plays, as I hope to show, peculiar circumstances render it especially significant, so that it becomes a touchstone by which we can distinguish with something very like certainty the work of Rowley from that of Middleton. For this purpose, the difference in the proportion of feminine endings is undoubtedly the most important, for, as will readily appear from reference to the extracts given, the character of the rhythm is entirely changed by the frequent presence of the one or two extra syllables at the ends of the lines, and as these are found in large numbers in all the verse of the Middleton plays of this period, whereas in Rowley's there are so few that they are never conspicuous, we are here furnished with a ready and convenient test by which we may make a rough division of the scenes of the joint plays between the two dramatists. Accordingly, in considering "A Fair Quarrel," I shall make the division first upon this basis, and then endeavor to verify it by evidence founded upon other investigations.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> See extract from *Women Beware Women*, p. 25.

## IV.

The first result of the partnership of Middleton and Rowley was "A Fair Quarrel," printed in 1617, with the title: "A Faire Quarrel. As it was acted before the King and divers times publicly by the Prince his Highness Servants. Written by Thomas Midleton and William Rowley, Gentlemen."<sup>1</sup> The entry of the court performance is not to be found, but that the play was well received there is further evidence in its republication the same year with a new title page and "additions of Mr. Chough's and Mr. Tristrem's Roaring." Rowley himself says of it in his Dedication, "It has been seen, though I say it, in good company, and many have said it is a handsome pretty-spoken infant;" and it was brought out again in 1622. Evidently it was a triumphantly successful piece. We find no such evidences of popularity in the history of any play written alone by either Middleton or Rowley, if we except Middleton's "Game at Chess," whose remarkable vogue must be explained largely by adventitious reasons; and it is reasonable to suppose that the happy result of this first venture encouraged the two dramatists to continue the partnership.

The play is so well known that it is unnecessary to give the story, but it should be remarked that it consists of a main plot and an underplot, the former concerned with the story of Captain Ager and his mother, and the latter, which was founded on an Italian novel, with the fortunes of Fitzallen, Russell, and Jane.<sup>2</sup> The main plot includes, I. 1 (first part); II. 1; III. 1, 3; IV. 3; and V. (last part); and the underplot fills up the rest of the play.

An examination of the verse gives peculiarly suggestive results. In the first place, with reference to feminine endings. Discarding prose<sup>3</sup> and unfinished lines, we find that in I. to

<sup>1</sup> Title-page 4to.

<sup>2</sup> Langbaine (*Account of English Dramatic Poets*) says: "That part of the Physician tempting Jane and then accusing her is founded on a novel of Cinthio Giraldi, — see Dec. 4, Nov. 5; " but Giraldi's story is used merely as a suggestion, the circumstances being much altered.

<sup>3</sup> In speaking of "prose" and "verse" in connection with these early plays, it should be remembered that the division is incontestable only where it is evident to every ear. The quartos are so wretchedly printed that they are not to be depended upon; for instance, *A Woman Never Vext*,

the entrance of Jane and Fitzallen (136 lines) there are 40 feminine endings; I. the rest of the act (288 lines) 74; II. 1 (228 lines) 121; II. 2 (106 lines) 27; III. 1 (184 lines) 94; III. 2 (176 lines) 50; III. 3 (44 lines) 23; IV. 1, prose; IV. 2 (78 lines) 28; IV. 3 (124 lines) 55; IV. 4, prose; V. 1, to the entrance of Captain Ager (172 lines) 41; remainder of the scene (35 lines), 20. That is to say, in the scenes of the main plot, the feminine endings reach or exceed the proportion of one in two; while in the underplot,—except in I. first part, and III. 2, which give one in three and which will be treated below,—the proportion is one fourth or less.

There is here, as the reader will doubtless have noted, exactly the difference that we found between Middleton's usual verse and Rowley's in respect to the number of feminine endings,<sup>1</sup> and there is, moreover, a difference in the character of these endings that corresponds to that previously noticed in the verse of these two dramatists.<sup>2</sup> In V. first part, 172 lines, there is not a single double ending; in the last part of the same act, 35 lines, there are two; in II. 1 (188 lines), there are 16; and this relative proportion holds throughout the play. The difference in the sound of the verse is easily seen from short extracts.

CAPTAIN AGER: "I never felt a more severe necessity.  
 Then came thy excellent pity. Not yet ready?  
 Have you such confidence in my just manhood,  
 That you dare so long trust me, and yet tempt me  
 Beyond the toleration of man's virtue?  
 Why would you be more cruel than your injury?  
 Do you first take pride to wrong me, and then think me  
 Not worth your fury?" — III. 1.

CAPT. AGER: "It kills  
 At one report two reputations,  
 A mother's and a son's. If it were possible

is printed throughout as verse, the lines, it need hardly be said, being divided upon no principle that can be discovered. Whenever possible, it is probably safest to follow the reading of Dyce, whose ear for rhythm is invariably correct. He has altered the arrangement of the text rather freely; but his edition of the Middleton-Rowley plays is, on the whole, reliable, and it furnishes the basis for the following examination of their verse.

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 27, 28.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 28.

That souls could fight after the body fell,  
This were a quarrel for 'em ; he should be one *indeed*  
That never heard of heaven's joy nor hell's torment  
To fight this out." — II. 1.

LADY AGER : " I did that  
For my affection's sake — goodness forgive *me for't*,  
That were my own life's safety put upon 't,  
I 'd rather die than do 't. Think how you used *me then* ;  
And yet would go and hazard yourself too." — IV. 3.

Over against these, stand such lines as, —

PHYSICIAN : " Indeed I cannot tell you ; you know, nurse,  
These are above the quantity of price ;  
Where is the glory of the goodliest trees  
But in the fruit and branches ? the old stock  
Must decay ; and sprigs, scions such as these  
Must become new stocks, for us to glory  
In the fruitful issue ; so we are made  
Immortal one by other." — III. 2.

Or —

JANE : " Can art be so dim-sighted, learned sir ?  
I did not think her so incapacious.  
You train me, as I guess, like a conjurer,  
One of our fine oraculous wizards,  
Who from the help of his examinant  
By the near guess of his suspicion  
Points out the thief by the marks he tells *him*." — II. 2.

RUSSELL : " Welcome, son-in-law ! this was beyond your hope :  
We old men have pretty conceits sometimes,  
Your wedding day 's prepared and this is it ;  
How think you of it ? " — V. 1.

Examining these two groups of passages, we find that not only do they differ essentially from each other, but they differ in the same ways in which the citations from Middleton given above differed from the passages cited from Rowley ; that is to say, the verse of the one group resembles Middleton's verse, and that of the other resembles Rowley's. If we compare the first group with the Middleton passages,<sup>1</sup> we find that there is a remarkable similarity in the employment of feminine endings and end-stopt lines, and also that in both sets of passages the

<sup>1</sup> Page 25.

alternation of accent is regular. The second group will be found to agree as completely with the speech of Old Foster.<sup>1</sup> There are very few feminine endings, a large number of the lines run on, and there is the same carelessness in the placing of the accent. Compare, for example, the second line of Old Foster's speech with the fifth of the Physician's, the tenth with the last of Jane's, the fourth with the first of Russell's. Notice also the irregularity of accent in the last two feet in the fourth line of the Physician's, the inversion of the last foot in the fourth line of Jane's, the excess of syllables in the third, and the so-called French treatment of the accent in the second line of Russell's speech. These are all marks of Rowley's hand, and such marks are found in great numbers in all the verse of the underplot; but they are not found in that of the main plot, from which passages similar to those cited, showing Middleton's characteristics and differing widely from these, may be selected at random.

Now it is true that the metrical test is not invariably reliable. We are not to suppose that a poet's manner may not differ essentially in different periods of his life, or that he may not intentionally on occasion adopt a rhythm different from the one he habitually uses. Indeed a shadow of uncertainty is thrown over Mr. Macaulay's very careful and intelligent division of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays by the fact that we can so often give some æsthetic or practical reason why Fletcher should have employed the Shakespearean verse in a given passage instead of the rhythm peculiar to himself. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances under which such objections as these are invalid, when similarity of verse must be admitted to be a strong argument for identity of authorship; and in these cases the very mechanical character which is urged against the test becomes an advantage in making it peculiarly convenient, and permitting less difference of opinion among critics than is inevitable when the question is one of temper and literary quality instead of one of feminine endings and run-on lines.

This appears to be a case where circumstances give a particularly strong support to its validity. As we have seen, the difference in verse between the scenes of the play is very great, too great to have been accidental; it must mean something.

<sup>1</sup> Page 26.

Apparently, it must mean one of two things. Either a difference in the character of the scenes rendered such a difference in verse desirable for art's sake, or natural as a convenience,—certainly a possible explanation in some of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays; or else the metrical habits of the two men concerned in it were different, and the difference in verse means a difference in authorship. But here the former supposition is evidently very far from the truth, for the verse of the familiar Fletcherian type is regularly used in the most serious and impressive scenes, while an attempt at a more dignified masculine style of rhythm is made in the commonplace situations of the underplot, an arrangement the reverse of which is found in the Beaumont and Fletcher plays, and the reverse of what would have been natural if the rhythm had been consciously chosen. On the other hand, the latter supposition is rendered exceedingly likely by the facts ascertained in the study of the unassisted plays of Middleton and Rowley, first, that the metrical habits of the two men were so different that we should expect two kinds of verse in a joint play, and secondly, that the differences were such as to correspond exactly with those noted in the different parts of this play written in partnership; that is to say, the difference between the scenes of "A Fair Quarrel" is precisely what we should naturally expect to find in a play in which both Middleton and Rowley were concerned. The conclusion is, I believe, almost inevitable that Middleton wrote the scenes in which the verse shows his usual characteristics, and Rowley wrote those whose verse bears such decided marks of his hand.

It seems then that, if we except the first part of the first act and the second scene of the third, which we will leave for the moment, the whole weight of evidence furnished by the verse test—and we have seen it to be in this case particularly heavy—is thrown in support of the division of the play which would assign the main plot to Middleton and the underplot to Rowley. Moreover, this division is further supported by numerous other bits of evidence, considerations of style and plot, parallel passages, and the like, which although they might not in themselves prove convincing, are yet extremely valuable as corroboratory evidence, strengthening an established probability.

For example, the construction of the main plot is far better

than that of any play of Rowley's. Each episode moves the plot on, and each speech is essential to the adequate presentation of the situation in which it appears: it would be exceedingly difficult to cut the Captain Ager episode. Even the introduction of the Colonel's sister, who is brought in at the end in order to make possible the required marriage consummation of a comedy, is cleverly used as a means of bringing about the reconciliation of the two friends and of displaying the exaggerated magnanimity of the Colonel, which is, of course, his contribution towards making the quarrel a "Fair" one. There are none of those absurdly unrelated episodes which distract the attention from the theme, such as we have found in "*All's Lost by Lust.*" In the swiftness of its movement and the unity of its effects, the main plot of "*A Fair Quarrel*" resembles "*Women Beware Women*" and the Middleton comedies, not the plays of Rowley.

Moreover, the way in which the situations are developed suggests Middleton. To make the virtue of the mother appear clearly to the audience, without a single aside, through the denials of her innocence, while yet the son, who doubts it, never loses their sympathy for an instant, is a task that required all the subtlety of treatment that Middleton revealed in the women's dialogue, "*Women Beware Women*," II. 2, and in the "*Game at Chess*," but of which Rowley never showed himself capable. The dialogue in these scenes, moreover, shows great self-control, and also the entire adequacy of the dramatist to the demands of unusually trying situations. No one can read the duel scene without being struck with the noble moderation, the essential gentlemanliness, displayed in the dialogue. Charles Lamb has chosen this scene for his strongest commendation, and it is unnecessary to try to add to his well-known praises of its execution; but a reader of Rowley has only to call to mind the last act of his tragedy and consider the opportunities in this duel scene for invective, for bathos, and for cut-and-thrust action, to feel convinced that the workmanship here is not his.

These scenes of the main plot, then, are distinguished by qualities we have noted as belonging to Middleton and not to Rowley. Now setting them over against the scenes of the underplot, we feel at once a difference in treatment, and see in the latter Rowley's characteristics as plainly as in the former we saw Middleton's.

In the first place there is Rowley's usual lack of firmness in construction and of the sense of proportion. Much space is given to the scenes connected with the Roaring School, which certainly have a slight enough connection with the story of Fitzallen, Jane, and the Physician; and in IV. 4, three characters, Captain Albo, Meg and Priss, appear prominently, although they have absolutely no office to fill in the evolution of the plot and do not appear again. This slovenly construction reminds us of that of the underplot of "All's Lost by Lust" and the disconnected scene that Rowley contributed to "The Travails of Three English Brothers."

Moreover, the quality of the fun is characteristic of Rowley. It depends very largely upon the action and the conception, is clownish rather than satirical, and the verbal wit, what there is of it, is in the form of puns. Russell gets two bad ones into a few lines :—

"But I'll bring one within a day to thee  
Shall rouse thee up, for he's come up already :  
One Master Chough, a Cornish gentleman ;  
Has as much land of his own fee-simple  
As a crow can fly over in half a day :  
And now I think on 't, at the Crow at Oldgate  
His lodging is." — I. i.

Farther on,

RUSSELL: "How do you like her, sir?"

COUGH: "Troth, I do like her, sir, in the way of comparison to anything a man would desire." — II. 2.

Now Middleton is not particularly fond of puns, but Rowley's passion for them is notorious. One remembers that he even saw fit to introduce them into epitaphs, writing on Greene, the actor, the extraordinary lines :—

"How fast bleak Autumn changeth Flora's dye ;  
What yesterday was Green, now's sere and dry,"

and ended his elegy to Hugh Atwell, another actor, with

"He's changed his Hugh, yet he remains At-well."

In view of these facts, the remarkable number of examples of this form of wit to be found in the underplot of "A Fair Quarrel" seems decidedly significant.

There are here, too, innumerable figures, allusions and the like that are common in Rowley plays. To be sure, some of them are not original with him, and their presence does not furnish absolute proof. Still it seems worth while to quote a few, for some of them are decidedly striking; they are not found in the main plot, and they do not appear to have been used by Middleton elsewhere.

JANE: "Thou 'st fished with silver hooks and golden baits,  
But I 'll avoid all thy deserving slights." — *A Fair Quarrel*, III. 2.

JANE: "And baited fishes with your silver hooks." — *A Woman Never Vexed*.

JANE: "As men pull roses  
For their own relish, but to kill the flower." — *A Fair Quarrel*, V. 1.

JACINTA: "Say that some rapine hand had plucked the bloom,  
Jacinta, like that flower." — *All's Lost by Lust*, III. 1.

COUGH: "I 'll wear my bachelor's buttons still."

TRIMTRAM: "So will I, i' faith; they are the best flowers in any  
man's garden next to heart's-ease." — *A Fair Quarrel*, V. 1.

Compare with this the use made by Robert and Jane of the language of flowers, "*A Woman Never Vexed*," III. 1.

Much more significant is the fact that there are several situations in this underplot which are similar in character to situations constantly found in plays bearing Rowley's name, and they are treated in a similar manner. For instance, in the second act we have the episode of the young girl introduced by her father to a clownish suitor which has been remarked in "*A Woman Never Vexed*" and "*A Match at Midnight*." As in them, the mother does not appear. Comparing the talk of Russell, Jane, and Cough in "*A Fair Quarrel*," II. 2, with that of Brewer, Speedwell, Lambkin, and Jane in "*A Woman Never Vexed*," III. 1, and that of Moll and Earlack, "*A Match at Midnight*," II. 2, we find that the quality of these corresponding scenes of the three plays is similar. Again, in III. 2, we find Jane spitting at the Physician, a curious incident paralleled in "*All's Lost by Lust*" and "*A Match at Midnight*"; and the freedom of the girl's invectives,

"O you 're a foul dissembling hypocrite!"

"Out, outside of a man; thou cinnamon tree."

"Poison thyself, thou foul empoisoner!"

reminds us strongly of Jacinta's in "*All's Lost by Lust*." Mid-

dleton's women, even the fiercest of them, are more moderate in speech.

This last scene, it will be remembered, was one of the two in which feminine endings appeared in somewhat greater numbers than usual, and which therefore was properly treated as doubtful in dividing the play on the basis of metrical tests. A fuller examination of the scene, however, shows that there is no valid reason here for doubting Rowley's authorship. In the first place, the excess of feminine endings is not large,—not large enough to give the verse any resemblance to Middleton's in sound, and none of these endings is double. In the second place, the verse shows Rowley's management of the accent. Its character appears from the passage quoted above, the Physician's speech, which, as has been shown, is characteristically Rowley's. From the verse itself, then, the scene would be classed as Rowley's, and as we have found, it contains a characteristic Rowley situation treated in Rowley's usual manner. It is practically impossible to doubt his authorship of it.

The case of the other scene in which the proportion of feminine endings rises somewhat above that usual with Rowley is very similar to this. A large number of these extra final syllables occur in the last part of Russell's opening speech, where the verse certainly sounds much like Middleton's, and it is of course possible that he had a hand in it. It is dangerous, however, to rely wholly upon a verse test in so short a passage as this, and certainly it is going too far to assume merely from the character of this passage that Middleton wrote the whole of the episode in which it occurs.<sup>1</sup> And in the rest of the scene, while there seem to be no evidences of Middleton's authorship, there are many of Rowley's. The proportion of feminine endings rises very little above the usual Rowley proportion; the endings are commonly of but one extra syllable, which may often be slurred in reading; run-on lines abound; and the verse has the Rowley roughness,

“ Here has been such a stormy encounter twixt  
My cousin Captain and this brave Colonel,  
About I knew not what — nothing indeed —  
Competitions, degrees, and comparatives

<sup>1</sup> Fleay (*Chronicles of the English Drama*, ii. 98), assigns all of this scene before the entrance of Jane and Fitzallen to Middleton.

Of soldiership ; but this smooth passage of love  
Has calmed it all."

This carelessness in the management of the accent does not suggest Middleton. There are also suggestions of Rowley in the phrasing. A pun occurs which is repeated in Rowley's Dedication to the play and also in "All's Lost by Lust."

CAPT. AGER : " I have done, sir, but " —

RUSSELL : " But ? I 'll have no more shooting at these butts." —

## II. I.

Compare,

"Tis but a play, and a play is but a butt against which many shoot many arrows of envy." — *Dedication.*

ANTONIO : " Nay, but " —

CLOWN : " I 'll shoot at no such butts." — *All's Lost by Lust*, IV. I.

It is also worthy of notice that Russell constantly uses the exclamation *Tush !* Middleton's favorite expression is *Push !* He also uses *Pish !* but very rarely *Tush !* It is, however, common with Rowley.

The fact that this scene introduces the characters of the main plot, which, as a whole, is assigned to Middleton, is not an objection to the assignment of this scene to Rowley. As we shall see later, Rowley wrote the opening scene of "The Changeling" also, introducing us to the main plot, which is developed almost entirely by Middleton.

Scenes 1 and 4, act IV. being in prose, admit of no verse test, and it might be urged that the idea of the Roaring School is much like that of Lazarillo's school for managing husbands held in "Blurt, Master Constable," III. 3. But with the idea the resemblance ends. Middleton's scene is an example of his occasional artificiality. It is worked out with a careful elaboration that wearies in spite of the brilliancy of the wit and the keen edge of the satire, which is of his finest quality ; the care and art seem misplaced upon a conception of such inherent absurdity, and the actors all wear a smirk of self-consciousness which spoils the fun. It was not a conception suited to Middleton's temper, which led him rather to realistic accuracy than to the exaggeration of burlesque ; but with an absurd notion in his head to work out, Rowley was in his element, and so we turn with pleasure from Lazarillo's ladies to the Roaring School.

In spite of the coarseness and foolishness of their repartee, scholars and preceptors alike have a dash, a rollicking jollity that pleases us, sets us in a good humor, and is not natural to Middleton's characters. It is the quality of "A Woman Never Vexed."

If we assign these prose scenes to Rowley, together with those other scenes of "A Fair Quarrel" that seemed to us in the foregoing investigation to be of a character more congenial to his genius than to Middleton's, we shall have assigned to him the whole of the underplot; and for similar reasons, as we have seen, we should assign the main plot, except the first scene, to Middleton. But this, it will be remembered, was precisely the division that, wherever it could be applied, was first made on the basis of the verse test. Accordingly we see that, far from disproving the validity of this test, investigation of the character of this play has tended to establish it; and as no explanation of the difference in verse seems possible except that based upon a difference in authorship, and as the verse test is supported, as we have seen it to be, by much supplementary evidence, we are surely justified in regarding it as reliable in this instance.

In the first play, then, in which the two dramatists worked together, they followed the plan of assigning the main plot to one and the underplot to the other. Their second production was a mask, whose slender thread of plot did not permit such a division as this. It was called "The World Tost at Tennis," and must have been written early in 1620, for it celebrated the marriage of Charles, Lord Howard, to the Lady Mary, daughter of Sir William Cockaine, married April 22, 1620, and it was entered at Stationer's Hall on July 4 of that year. Apart from the verse there seems to be no definite evidence which can serve to fix the shares of the two men in this attractive little piece; but up to the entrance of the Five Starches, the number of feminine endings is small, and the verse shows Rowley's carelessness in the management of the accents and of unaccented syllables, while beyond that point the proportion of feminine endings is enormously increased, and the rhythm is smooth and flowing. This difference in verse appears at once if we put beside each other two extracts which fairly exemplify the style of the two parts of the mask. The extracts chosen are taken

from successive speeches, the one before and the one after, the entrance of the Starches : —

JUPITER : "I tell thee, glorious daughter, and you, things  
 Shut up in wretchedness, the world knew once  
 His age of happiness, blessed times owned him,  
 Till those two ugly ills, Deceit and Pride,  
 Made it a perished substance. Pride brought in  
 Forgetfulness of goodness, merit, virtue,  
 And placed ridiculous officers in life,  
 Vain glory, fashion, humour, and such toys,  
 That shame to be produced." . . .

*Enter the Starches.*

WHITE STARCH : "What, no respect amongst you? Must I wake you  
 In your forgetful duties? jet before me!  
 Take place of me? — You rude presumptuous gossip,  
 Pray who am I? not I the primitive Starch?  
 You blue-ey'd frokin, looks like fire and brimstone; —  
 You caudle-colour, much of the complexion  
 Of High Shrove-Tuesday batter, yellow-hammer; —  
 Know I'm Starch Protestant, thou Starch Puritan."

These passages, as appears from application of the verse test, are distinctly Rowley and Middleton verse, and, as has been said, they are representative passages; we find that the respective characteristics of the two men appear with equal clearness in the rest of the mask. Accordingly, if this verse test is admitted to be reliable, we must assign to Rowley the portion before the entrance of the Starches, and to Middleton the remaining portion.

The next play produced by Middleton and Rowley in partnership was probably "The Changeling;" but, that we may have all possible evidence in before proceeding to what is undoubtedly the chief point of interest in our discussion, it will be advisable to stop for a moment and consider the fourth and last play on the list, "The Spanish Gipsy."

This seems to have appeared somewhat after "The Changeling," for Costanza seems to allude to that play in one place,<sup>1</sup> but evidently it came not very long after, for it was noted by Sir Henry Herbert among the court plays of 1623 and 1624, and "The Changeling" appears in the same list. It is a graceful

<sup>1</sup> "None but myself shall play the changeling." — II. i.

and interesting little piece, of a romantic turn, possessing some scenes of very considerable merit and a good deal of agreeable verse, but not remarkable for any strength of thought or originality of conception. Most of the verse is of what we have already recognized as the Middleton quality, the exception being found in the verse of Act II., which introduces the gypsies as well as continues the story of Clara. Here the feminine endings fall much below the Middleton proportion, and, moreover, the joking of Sancho and Soto strongly resembles that of Chough and his man in "A Fair Quarrel;" puns abound; and in the serious scenes the verse often halts badly, showing Rowley's common characteristics. From these indications it would appear probable that Act II. was written wholly or in large part by him. As for the rest of the play, in Act I. the lines constantly maintain the Middleton proportion of feminine endings, one in two, and they run with the smoothness that comes of regularity of accent. Moreover, the dialogue is full of poetic images of great beauty, reminding the reader of those with which Middleton has sweetened the more distasteful subject of the underplot of "Women Beware Women," and it maintains itself upon a higher level of elegance and dignity than that upon which Rowley was accustomed to write. Act III. affords only scattered passages of blank verse, hardly enough to admit of any very certain application of the verse test; but Rowley has nowhere shown that he possessed the metrical skill exhibited in the lively, jingling little lyrics with which it closes, whereas Middleton has scattered just such songs through "The Witch" and "More Dissemblers Besides Women," IV. 1; the same remark applies to the following scene, which shows, moreover, in its unrhymed passages, Middleton's usual proportion of feminine endings; scene 3, too, bears the marks of Middleton's hand as well in the smoothness of its verse and the feminine endings as in the dignity and self-restraint of the dialogue, which is admirably planned and expressed. In the fourth act, the first scene, like the first scenes of III., is full of jingling songs, and the double-pointed jests in the gypsies' play in the later scenes are suggestive of Middleton. Indeed, the episode reminds us strongly of the ironically appropriate presentation of "The Slip" by Lord Owemuch's players in "A Mad World, my Masters." Throughout this act and the next, the blank verse shows a proportion of feminine endings

rather greater than one in two, and is very regular as to the placing of the accent.

As the excellence of the invention, the temperance of manner, the dignity of the serious passages in these four acts, and the evenness of style, bespeak Middleton rather than Rowley, there seems to be little doubt but that here, as well as in "A Fair Quarrel," the verse test points to the truth, and that the greater part of the play—all but the second act—belongs to Middleton. This is substantially the opinion of the critics who have considered the play. Fleay ("Chronicles of the English Drama," ii. 101) thinks that the whole play is Middleton's, but Bulleyn ("Works of Middleton," Introduction, 72) says the gipsy scenes "were doubtless largely the work of Rowley;" and Swinburne ("Introduction to Thomas Middleton," Mermaid Edition, 30 and 31) says: "Whatever is best in the tragic or in the romantic part of this play bears the stamp of Middleton's genius alike in the sentiment and the style;" adding, however, "the rough and ready hand of Rowley may be traced not indeed in the more high-toned passages, but in many of the most animated scenes of 'The Spanish Gipsy.'" The reader will find these animated scenes in the second act, where Rowley's hand has already been traced.

Returning to "The Changeling," we find it noted in Sir Henry Herbert's "Office Book" as having been acted at Whitehall on January 4, 1623, by the Queen of Bohemia's Company, and there is evidence that the play was an acting success. It was presented at the Cockpit and at Salisbury Court; just before the Civil Wars, Robins acted the part of Antonio in it; and we learn that one of Betterton's best parts was that of De Flores. In 1660–1661, Pepys went to see it, "the first time it hath been acted these twenty years"—the period of the closing of the theatres having intervened—"and it takes exceedingly." It was printed for Humphrey Moseley in 1653, and was again put forth in 1668 with a new title-page:—"The Changeling, as it was acted (with great applause) by the Servants of His Royal Highness the Duke of York, at the Theatre in Lincoln Inn Fields."<sup>1</sup>

The main plot of the play was suggested by a story in "God's Revenge Against Murder," published in 1621, one of those col-

<sup>1</sup> Dyce, *Works of Thomas Middleton*, vol. iv.

lections of blood-curdling tales that helped to fill the place now occupied by the "Police News" and kindred publications ; but the dramatists used the story with great freedom. The novel contains no hint of the physical horror with which De Flores inspires Beatrice ; on the contrary, he is described as "a gallant young gentleman ;" there is no indication that the lady made any resistance to his demands ; and the end of the story also is changed. Few would agree with Ward that these considerable changes are for the worse, and it is impossible to understand why Dyce, who admits that "*The Changeling*" displays in several places a depth of passion unequalled throughout the volumes of Middleton's plays, should yet have pronounced it "on the whole inferior to the tragedy of '*Women Beware Women.*'" The underplot, it is true, is thin and clumsily connected with the main story, and the introduction of madmen in comedy is repulsive to our modern taste ; but it was far from repulsive to an Elizabethan audience, and there are few plays of this period that are not disfigured by equally objectionable underplots. With a rough audience before him, and a "sad, too sad a tragedy" in his mind, the dramatist was forced to devise some such fooleries to throw as a sop to the howling apprentices in the pit, or possibly to other persons of a higher rank in life but little better taste, who, as Dekker rather pathetically observes, "having paid their money, have some right to be considered." If an underplot possesses the requisites for popularity, it fulfills its function ; and, as we have seen from the fondness of actors for it, the underplot of "*The Changeling*" was popular.

Setting the underplot aside, I think that we should find few plays outside of Shakespeare equal to "*The Changeling*" in depth of passion and absolute truth of expression, in the relentless march of the plot to the catastrophe, and in the noble seriousness with which it was conceived and treated throughout. The growth of sin in the human soul has never been analyzed with a keener insight or painted with a more relentless certainty of touch than in the picture of the gradual breaking down of the character of Beatrice Joanna after her first yielding to temptation ; and no one who has felt the power of the great scene in the third act, or the horror of the closing scene of "*The Changeling*," can regard as a matter of indifference the respec-

tive shares of the authors in the conception and the execution of this remarkable drama. It is undoubtedly by far the most interesting of the plays we have to consider.

We find that here, as in the others, there is much difference in treatment between the different scenes. In the underplot, I. 2; III. 3; IV. 3, forms of expression often recall those in other plays in which Rowley had a hand. The queer joke:—

ALIBRIUS: "I am old, Lolloio."

LOLLOIO: "No, sir, 't is I am old Lolloio." — *The Changeling*, I. 2.  
is paralleled in "The Maid in the Mill": —

PHILIPPO: "Oh, your wife, Franio?"

FRANIO: "'Tis 'oh, my wife' indeed, my Lord." — V. 2.

Lolloio, when he hears the noise the madmen are making overhead, says: "Must I come amongst you, then? Keep you the fool, mistress; I'll go up and play left-handed Orlando among the madmen," III. 3; reminding the reader of the Host in "A Woman Never vexed," when the gamblers get noisy: "How, now, my fine trundle-tails, my wooden cosmographers? my bowling ally in an uproar? Is Orlando up in arms? . . . Have amongst you," II. 1. Tony says: —

" Shall I alone

Walk through the garden of th' Hesperides,

And cowardly not dare to pull an apple?" — *The Changeling*, III. 3.

and the same figure, almost the same words, occur in "The Maid in the Mill": —

ANTONIO: "Shall I walk by the tree, desire the fruit,  
Yet be so nice to pull?" — IV. 1.

Again: —

FRANCISCUS: "Give me thy hand."

LOLLOIO: "Stay, let me put yours in my pocket first," [putting letter into his pocket]. — *The Changeling*, IV. 3.

while in "All's Lost by Lust": —

ANTONIO: "Is not this thy hand?"

DIONYSIA: "I have three, then, it should seem,  
For I have two of my own fingering." — II.

Besides such parallel expressions, the scenes of the underplot have many of the qualities that serve to distinguish Rowley's

work from Middleton's. There is a decided tendency to burlesque and to horse-play in the antics of the supposed madmen, and there is none of the charm of delicacy of expression and poetic fancy that Middleton could throw about even a distasteful subject. Moreover, in examining into the character of the fun furnished by these scenes, we find that their effectiveness depends almost entirely upon the clown part of Tony, in the same way that the fun in "All's Lost by Lust" depends upon Jaques, in "The Birth of Merlin" upon Joan's brother, and in "The Maid in the Mill" upon Bustofa. Now the antic clown pure and simple is not a Middleton creation, but Rowley, who took clown parts himself (Jaques and Plumporridge) was remarkably fond of him. The clown appears not only in the instances cited, but also, although occupying a less important position, as the widow's servant in "A Woman Never Vexed," and as Tim in "A Match at Midnight," and all of these bear a general resemblance to Tony.

Evidently the character of the scenes of the underplot suggests Rowley rather than Middleton; as we shall see,<sup>1</sup> the verse test strongly supports this probability; and the critics who have expressed an opinion in the matter have agreed in assigning it wholly to him. (Fleay, "Chronicles of the English Drama," ii., 101; Bullen, "Works of Thomas Middleton," Introduction, p. 59).

In the main plot, it will be noticed that the opening situation, I., bears a considerable resemblance to a situation previously shown to have been a favorite with Rowley. There is the usual unattractive, although not in this case ridiculous, lover, who is favored by the father, but set aside by the young lady in favor of a more agreeable suitor, and, as usual with Rowley, the girl's mother does not appear. Then the comic interlude of the fooling of the servant man and the ladies' maid is comparable to the waking of Lazarillo by kicks in "All's Lost by Lust;" it is a broad kind of fun which Middleton is not fond of, and at which no attempt is made in the other scenes of the Beatrice-Joanna story. Notice also that Beatrice throws her glove at De Flores with a taunt. This recalls the incidents where Moll spits at her suitor, wishing to mock him, and Jacinta spits at her jailor. Middleton, one remembers, was not fond of stage violence; but Rowley was by no means averse to it in his women.

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 49, 50.

In the intervening scenes, Beatrice's hatred of her betrayer never manifests itself in physical movements, and in expression, also, a similar self-control will be remarked. Here the contrast with Rowley's usual methods is striking. The violence of the language in the scenes between Jacinta and Lazarillo, and also between Jane and the Physician, has already been pointed out. In both these cases the impelling emotions are simple, direct, and easily comprehensible, and they find expression in an exaggerated and unrestrained vehemence that is almost brutal, and that repels our sympathy by depriving the actors of dignity. Both the girls surfeit us with a wealth of vituperation that seems to us unwomanly. But in the great scene of the temptation in the third act of "The Changeling," the restrained dignity of the dialogue is even more remarkable than we have found it in some of the scenes of "Women Beware Women." From Beatrice, we hear only a few panting cries and pleas for mercy, which, we hardly know how, manage to convey to us all the story, which is by no means a simple one, of the girl's temptation and fall, the dawn of suspicion in her mind, her horror in the first certainty of her ruin, the conflict between physical repulsion and the incitement of fear. The very repressed calmness increases to an almost unbearable tension the strain upon our sympathies, while the exaggerated vehemence of Rowley often leaves us unmoved. In the one case, the reader feels that the dramatist is doing his utmost and hardly rising to the demands of the occasion ; in the other, the adequacy is unquestionable, and it is supported by a fund of reserve force ; we have here the difference between the trained master of expression and the undisciplined tyro ; between the conscious realist, keen, cold, observant, and the honest and sympathetic, but coarse, rough and ready writer, trained in the old school of romanticism ; in other words, we have the difference between Middleton and Rowley.

This scene of the temptation contains at least three expressions strikingly paralleled in other plays of Middleton's :—

BEATRICE : " My joys start at mine eyes."

DUKE : " Our joys break at our eyes." — *The Phoenix*, V. 1.

Further on :—

DE FLORES : " What makes your lip so strange ? "

LEANTIO : " You make your lip so strange ! " — *Women Beware Women*, III. 1.

and at the end : —

DE FLORES : "'Las, how the turtle pants !'

as in a similar situation, the Duke says : —

" I feel thy breast shake like a turtle panting." — *Women Beware Women*, II. 2.

Throughout the main plot, with the exception of I. 1 ; V. 2, 3, we find similar suggestions of Middleton's imagery and phrasing. It is true the play shows equally striking parallelisms with plays of other dramatists,— compare De Flores : " Come, rise, and shroud your blushes in my bosom," III., 4, with the Duchess : " Come let me shroud my blushes in your bosom" ("The Duchess of Malfi," I. 1),— and it would be dangerous to insist upon such coincidences as proof of Middleton's authorship. Still their number is certainly striking, and not paralleled in any scenes of Rowley's, and their presence deserves notice as increasing a probability which is made strong by other considerations.

Not only III. 4, but also the other scenes of the main plot, with the exceptions made above, are full of subtlety and relentless realism, which study of the two dramatists has convinced us are not Rowley's. The shock with which the pampered girl realizes that the man she has brought to murder is indeed wicked and capable of hurting her as well as her victim; the gradual growth of a kind of abnormal affection for her betrayer,

" His face loathes one ;

But look upon his care, who would not love him ? "

the relentless portrayal of a selfishness in this weak girl as colossal as that of Bianca Capello, who assents to her husband's ruin with the careless words to the Duke,

" I love peace, sir." — *Women Beware Women*, IV. 1.

the irony of the situation when Alsemoro is brought to reward De Flores for duping him ; these were subjects more congenial to Middleton's temper than they would have been to the straightforward crudeness of Rowley's genius.

When we come to the last scene we see the difference in the work of the two men in situations of similar character. Here

we have Rowley again. There is no more of that self-control that we have found so admirable in preceding scenes. The dialogue is full of invectives and violent expressions that recall the energetic language of "All's Lost by Lust!" Alsemero : "Peace, crying crocodiles!" "You twins of mischief!" "O cunning devils!" Vermandero : "Horrid villain!" Beatrice : "He lies! The villain does belie me!" and there is a violence in the action that makes the catastrophe as unlike as it well could be to the ending of "Women Beware Women," where the victims are either quietly poisoned or else dropped through trap-doors, in which case a crash tells the story, and the audience is left convinced but unappalled. We are here reminded of the last act of Rowley's tragedy, in which Julianus, appearing upon the stage with bloody sockets, is forced to kill his daughter before he himself is slain, and Margaret strangles the supposed Antonio before the eyes of the audience and afterwards stabs herself, falling upon the dead body of her husband. The story of "The Changeling" did not admit of such a bloody scene as this, but as much as possible has been made of the physical horror that the tale permitted :—

BEATRICE (within): "O, O, O!"

ALSEMERO : "Hark! 't is coming to you."

DE FLORES (within): "Nay, I'll along for company."

BEATRICE (within): "O, O!"

VERMANDERO : "What horrid sounds are these?"

ALSEMERO : "Come forth, you twins

Of mischief!"

(*Re-enter De Flores dragging in Beatrice wounded).*

VERMANDERO : "Horrid villain!

Keep life in him for further tortures."

DE FLORES : "No!

I can prevent you ; here's my pen-knife still.

It is but one thread more (stabbing himself), and now 't is cut.

Make haste, Joanna, by that token to thee,

Canst not forget, so lately put in mind ;

I would not go to leave thee far behind." (*Dies.*)

BEATRICE : "Forgive me, Alsemero, all forgive !

'T is time to die when 't is a shame to live." (*Dies.*)

Rowley is writing at his best here. The power of this scene is unquestionable. But before we reach the end of it, we find a

signal illustration of his inability to keep for a length of time upon the high level that he could sometimes reach. Scarcely have the last words left the lips of Beatrice when the remaining personages begin that curious punning upon the title of the play which brings us down abruptly from the lofty plane of tragic action to something resembling the conventional extravaganza. Middleton furnishes us with no similar instances of tactless punning, while Rowley's fondness for this form of wit is notorious, and its employment here is not perhaps remarkable for a man who could regard it as suitable to an elegy upon a friend.

We find, then, that in "The Changeling," as in "A Fair Quarrel" and "The Spanish Gipsy," the style of different scenes show different characteristics, corresponding to those of Rowley's style and Middleton's. Throughout the underplot the character of the fun, the burlesque and horseplay, constantly suggests Rowley; forms of expression recall passages in Rowley plays, and the prominence given to the clown part is characteristic of him. In the main plot, also, he seems to have had a hand. The opening situation is similar to situations in Rowley plays; vehemence in action and expression is noticeable, parallel expressions occur, and the character of the comic interlude suggests "All's Lost by Lust." In the last scene also, we saw traces of his hand. Here again, there is violence in action and expression, much vehemence and extravagance; there is an attempt at physical horror, the style shows lack of sustained power, and a series of excessively inappropriate puns smacks of Rowley. In the intervening scenes of the main plot, on the other hand, we found great self-restraint in action and expression, an absolute adequacy to the demands of singularly trying situations, and a subtlety of conception and treatment that seemed to be Middleton's; forms of expression suggested him, and the relentless realism that distinguishes him was noticeable throughout.

Now coming to the metrical examination of the play, we find our suspicions confirmed. In Acts II. 1, 2; III. 1, 2, 4; IV. 1, 2; and V. 1, 2 (the scenes in which we have found traces of Middleton), the proportion of feminine endings is approximately one in two; a large number of these endings are double or triple,—ten in the one hundred and seventy lines of III. 4; the end-stopt line prevails, and the verse flows easily and smoothly, showing

few lines in which the inversions fall on other than the first foot or the foot immediately following the cæsura. On the other hand, in acts I. 1, 2; III. 3; IV. 3; and V. 3, in which we have already seen traces of Rowley's hand, the proportion of feminine endings is less than one in four,—in I. 1 (205 lines) there are only forty; they are very rarely double or triple,—in I. 1, but two of the forty have double endings; run-on lines and weak endings abound, and the accent is very frequently inverted in the second and the last foot. These are exactly the usual differences between Middleton's rhythm and Rowley's, the differences we found between the scenes of "A Fair Quarrel;" and here the peculiarities of the two men are somewhat more fully developed than in the earlier play.

How striking is the dissimilarity of the verse may be seen by comparison of the shortest extracts from any scenes belonging to the two groups. In III. 4, De Flores replies to Beatrice's repulse:—

“ Soft, lady, soft !

The last is not yet paid for : O, this act  
 Has put me into spirit ; I was as greedy on 't  
 As the parch'd earth of moisture, when the clouds weep :  
 Did you not mark, I wrought myself into 't,  
 Nay, sued and kneel'd for 't ? why was all that pains took ?  
 You see I 've thrown contempt upon your gold ;  
 Not that I want it not, for I do piteously,  
 In order I 'll come unto 't and make use on 't,  
 But 't was not held so precious to begin with,  
 For I place wealth after the heels of pleasure.”

The likeness between this verse and that of Livia's complaint to Bianca, cited above,<sup>1</sup> is evident at once. There is the same preponderance of end-stopt lines and of feminine endings,—one a double ending and three of them refusing to be slurred over,—and the same regularity of accent. But compare the confession of Beatrice in V. 3, when she declares herself a murderer:—

“ A bloody one,  
 I have kissed poison for it, strok'd a serpent :  
 That thing of hate, worthy in my esteem  
 Of no better employment, and him most worthy  
 To be so employ'd, I caused to murder

<sup>1</sup> Page 25.

That innocent Piracquo, having no  
Better means than that worst to assure  
Yourself to me."

Note the inversion of the second foot in lines 4 and 7; the superfluity of syllables in 4 which is followed by a short line 5; the irregularity of 7, and the weak ending in 8. This second passage bears as strong a resemblance to Old Foster's speech (page 26) as the preceding bears to Livia's. As these are typical passages, it must be admitted that the verse test throws all its evidence in favor of assigning the first group of scenes to Middleton and the second to Rowley. Moreover, in this case, as in that of "A Fair Quarrel," this test gains peculiar significance from the fact that the Fletcherian verse, or that abounding in feminine endings and end-stopt lines, is used constantly in the most exalted passages, although it was regarded as peculiarly well suited to familiar, witty conversation, while the funny parts of the play are written in verse modelled after what was considered the more classic rhythm. Again, the same difference is found between the verse of scenes of similar character, such as III. 4, and V. 3. It would be difficult to explain these peculiar differences by any other theory than that which assumes that scenes bearing Middleton's verse characteristics were written by him, and those bearing Rowley's by Rowley; and as this division is, as we have seen, supported by other testimony of considerable weight, it seems hardly possible to come to any other conclusion than that suggested by this verse test,—namely, that the underplot, with the opening and closing scenes of the main plot were written by Rowley, and the intervening scenes of the latter by Middleton.

We find, then, that in regard to all four of the plays we have considered here, careful investigation has led us to agree substantially with the division which was made by Mr. Fleay in his "Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama,"<sup>1</sup> but which was not there supported by evidence. We should differ from him in assigning to Rowley the whole of the first scene of "A Fair Quarrel," which he gives to Middleton, and the second act of "The Spanish Gipsy," in which play he does not trace Rowley's

<sup>1</sup> Fleay's treatment of the Middleton-Rowley question will be found: *Chronicle of the English Drama*, ii. 95-105. Bullen's comments and also Swinburne's are quoted in full in the first part of this essay, pages 4, 8, 42.

hand ; we should also ascribe the first scene of the third act of "A Fair Quarrel" to Middleton, which indeed he probably would have done had not the type-setter prevented, and should fix the point of division in "A World Tost at Tennis" at the entrance of the Starches, which he has neglected to do. With these differences and additions, however, we should cordially assent in the main to his evident opinion that the more important, the more memorable scenes of these plays were the work of Middleton ; it may, as we have seen, be supported by evidence of the most convincing character, and so be removed from the uncertain domain of mere opinion, and placed upon the firmer ground of well-substantiated fact.

## V.

There is one point, however, upon which Mr. Fleay has not touched, and which is exceedingly important if one is to make a just estimate of the work of the two dramatists. Having considered the character of the scenes of these plays written by Middleton in comparison with that of the scenes contributed by Rowley, the reader is almost inevitably hurried to the conclusion that Rowley's contribution to the plays written in this partnership was a comparatively insignificant one, and that their remarkable excellence is largely, if not wholly, due to Middleton's genius. Indeed this has been the common opinion, and even Mr. Swinburne, who seems to be disposed to do full justice to Rowley, having remarked in connection with "A Fair Quarrel" that his part in it is easy for any tyro in criticism to unify, assigns him the underplot, and says that here his "besetting faults of coarseness and quaintness, stiffness and roughness, are so flagrant and obtrusive that we cannot avoid a feeling of regret and irritation at such untimely and inharmonious evidence of his partnership with a poet of finer if not of sturdier genius." But this conclusion is not a necessary one, and, although if we should confine Rowley's share in these plays to the scenes actually written by him, we should be disposed to agree with Mr. Swinburne, I believe that a second and more careful consideration of the character of the dramas in the light of our somewhat minute investigation into the respective qualities of the two dramatists, will show that this position is not tenable, and that the contribution of Rowley was the reverse of insignificant.

In the first place, it is not necessary to confine Rowley's influence upon these dramas to the scenes which show traces of his hand ; for the fact that it is possible to divide plays, and set aside certain scenes as having been written by Middleton and certain others by Rowley, does not by any means necessarily imply that these scenes belong to their respective writers in the same sense in which their unassisted work belongs to them.

This may appear to be a distinction too nice for serious consideration ; but it is possible to maintain the point. Playwrights accustomed to collaboration assert that, often enough, after a play is done, neither of the collaborators is able to state exactly what is his and what is the other man's. As they talk over the plan, the plot grows insensibly, situations develop and characters become fixed, and the man who is strong in plots is helped out by the other who can, perhaps, manage the details better than he. At the end, if one has more time or greater literary skill than the other, he may, perhaps, set the whole play down ; or at least it sometimes happens that the man who has had a less important share in the conception and planning out of any one scene may be the actual writer of it. But as the dialogue is not by any means the whole of a drama, it would be exceedingly unjust to give all the credit for the scene to him. Evidently, then, unless there is some reason why we should not admit that the partnership of Middleton and Rowley may have been of this nature, we are doing great injustice to Rowley if we assume, as critics generally have done, that his share in the plays was necessarily unimportant merely because those scenes that bear the mark of his hand happen to be the inferior ones.

And there is certainly nothing to prevent us from making such an admission. In the first place, the division of the responsibility for the actual writing-out of the scenes is a wholly natural one. Rowley took low comedy parts on the stage, and therefore may be supposed to have felt peculiar confidence in his knowledge of what was required in the underplot to make such a part strike the popular favor ; and from the few notices we have of him, it is evident that he was an extremely busy man, manager and playwright at the same time. Middleton not only was the better literary workman, but also seems to have had sufficient leisure to be able to devote himself exclusively to

the business of dramatic writing. Therefore it was natural that he should take upon himself the portions of these plays that required particular care and labor, leaving to his colleague the easy, farcical scenes of the underplot.

In the second place, it is not only possible that Middleton and Rowley consulted freely, and consequently influenced each other; it is extremely probable. Although in "The Changeling" they were compelled to deal with the same characters in trying situations—and those such difficult characters as Beatrice and De Flores—yet as we pass from one scene to another, we notice nothing incoherent in these parts, the treatment is consistent; and this achievement could hardly have been possible without a thorough mutual understanding. Evidently the two men consulted; and once admitting this fact of consultation, and the consequent influence of one man's ideas upon the other, the whole question of the respective shares of Middleton and Rowley in their joint plays assumes a new aspect.

I believe that the character of the plays at once becomes more comprehensible. For it grows more and more evident to the student, as he reads his Middleton carefully, that there is something in the scenes which were evidently written by him in "A Fair Quarrel," "The Spanish Gipsy," and "The Changeling" that is not found in the work he did without Rowley's aid. This appears in "A Fair Quarrel." We have seen that Middleton's attitude toward the world and humanity was distinctly an unromantic one: the innocence of his women was the perishable innocence of ignorance, and after the first young period of "The Phœnix" he gave the stage no more romantic paragons of the male sex. And yet here we have a play whose chief characteristic, whose one distinguishing feature, and, we may add, whose great enduring charm is extreme, exaggerated romanticism. Its hero is required "to know the boundaries of honour, to be judiciously valiant, to have a temperance which shall beget a smoothness in the angry swellings of youth, to esteem life as nothing when the sacred reputation of a parent is to be defended, yet to shake and tremble under a pious cowardice when that ark of an honest confidence is found to be frail and tottering, to feel the true blows of a real disgrace blunting that sword which the imaginary strokes of a supposed false imputation had put so keen an edge upon but lately" (Lamb's "Specimens"); and this

not for an act or two, the space that Leantio<sup>1</sup> can preserve his dignity, the Duchess<sup>2</sup> her chaste desires, and the Cardinal<sup>3</sup> his disinterestedness, but through the whole of the five acts of the play. Its principal woman figure, moreover, shows a purity and dignity of character unparalleled among Middleton's women; her motherly devotion is so complete that it exceeds her care for her honor; and the magnanimity of the Colonel, were it not so extravagant as to appear somewhat unnatural, might well serve as a model. Moreover, these characters never slip from the high plane of morality on which they move, but continue to act dignified parts to the end of the play,—a thing unparalleled in any play of Middleton's.

It is certainly not on the face of it probable that all these model personages proceeded from the brain that habitually evolved such figures as Lactantio, the Duke of Florence, Guardiano, and the debonair rascals and rich old schemers and profili-gates that act their amusing parts in Middleton's witty comedies; but on the other hand, this exaggerated excellence smacks strongly of William Rowley, the creator of General Julianus, of Margaretta, Jacinta, and "The Woman Never Vexed." More than this, the main theme of the play, the duel between friends under romantic conditions, is the theme of "A Cure for a Cuckold," also, and, with the substitution of the friend's son for the friend, it forms an important episode in "The Spanish Gipsy," in which Rowley was concerned; Middleton has never treated the theme in any play written without Rowley's assistance.

"The Spanish Gipsy," likewise, is an essentially romantic piece of work. Here the unswerving virtue and remarkable magnanimity of Clara, the extravagant command of Costanza to her lover, and his implicit obedience, recalling the command of the other Clara to Lessingham, bidding him kill his best friend, and the duel scene before alluded to,—all seem to point to the influence of Rowley upon the conception of a play which we have seen to have been largely the work of Middleton. These episodes and qualities, although they are found in no Middleton play, are prominent in the work of his colleague.

When we go on to "The Changeling" we find similar evi-

<sup>1</sup> *Women Beware Women.*

<sup>2</sup> *More Dissemblers Besides Women.*

<sup>3</sup> *Idem.*

dences of Rowley's influence upon the conception of the characters and upon the plot. We have already noted that the one point in which "Women Beware Women" falls short of "All's Lost by Lust" is in the sympathy which the actors in the two dramas inspire in the audience or the reader, and that the reason for this inferiority is Middleton's lack of belief in the essential dignity and beauty of human nature, a belief which Rowley possessed and without which sustained tragedy is impossible. Now "The Changeling" is concerned largely with the same theme as that of the other two tragedies; but while the characters in "Women Beware Women" become contemptible and lose our sympathy long before the beginning of the fifth act, in "The Changeling," as in "All's Lost by Lust," they do not.

In the first place, Beatrice, selfish, weak, cruel as she shows herself to be, yet engages our sympathy by the genuine horror and shame with which she first recognizes the certainty of her dishonor. This scene of the temptation, as has already been shown, bears marks of Middleton's hand; but while insisting upon these, we should also point out the striking similarity here in temper and in plan to the temptation of Jane by the Physician, which has been shown to be Rowley's. In both a service is rendered for which the lady offers payment in gold. This is scornfully refused:—

PHYSICIAN: "You will not offer it?  
Do not esteem my love so mercenary  
To be the hire of coin."

DE FLORES: "Do you place me in the rank of verminous fellows  
To destroy things for wages?"

The lady, surprised, proffers it again, and when the accomplice suggests the desired recompense, Jane and Beatrice reply in the same words:—

JANE: "I understand you not."  
BEATRICE: "I understand thee not."

When compelled to comprehend the demand, both meet it with like scorn and incredulity. Here the similarity between the two scenes ends; but up to this point, it has certainly been striking.

Now we must remember that in the novel there is no hint of

any such reluctance on the part of the lady,—the innocence of Beatrice as well as the ugliness of De Flores, was the invention of the dramatists; and considering Middleton's well-known contempt for feminine virtue, and the invariable readiness of his women to yield to temptation, we must admit that it is not an invention which seems natural for him. In consideration of this improbability, and of the fact that this scene strongly resembles a scene known to be by Rowley, it seems reasonable to conclude that his influence was powerful in determining its character.

Moreover, Rowley's influence is traceable beyond this point. In the later scenes, Beatrice is hardened and unlovely enough, it is true, and some of her speeches —

“ How heartily he serves me ! his face loathes one ;  
But look upon his care, who would not love him ? ” — V. i.  
“ Here 's a man worth loving.” — *Idem.*

show what would have been her character had the sole management of the plot been left to Middleton, whose theory of the weakness of humanity is epitomized in Livia's comment on Bianca's first bitterness : —

“ Sin tastes at the first draught like wormwood water ;  
But drunk again, 'tis nectar ever after.”

Rowley's view of the matter is clear enough from his great conception of the triumphant virtue of Jacinta, and from the universal purity of his women.

Now we find that, although the plot of the novel would have permitted it, Beatrice does not develop wholly in accordance with Middleton's theory ; she preserves some of her finer instincts to the end, or at least, she is never a shameless wanton, like Isabella, and like Bianca Capello, whose character promised better than hers at the introduction. She keeps so much of womanliness that, as she gasps out the words of shame and penitence that Rowley has put into her mouth before her death in his last scene, the words ring true ; they do not seem inconsistent with her character as developed in the Middleton scenes. In spite of her sins, she has kept our sympathy ; we pity her.

Alsemoro, too, although he is successfully deceived, is never

ridiculous ; indeed the dramatist has succeeded in engaging our sympathy for all the actors in the tragedy, with, of course, the intentional exception of De Flores. This Middleton never succeeded in doing in his unassisted plays, but Rowley did ; and under such circumstances, it does not seem rash to assume that Rowley's conception of the characters influenced that of his colleague.

If, however, we ascribe the humane treatment of this play to Rowley's influence, and if, furthermore, it is true that the romantic character of "A Fair Quarrel" and "The Spanish Gipsy" is due to him, then we must inevitably be led to the conclusion that in the consultation preceding the writing down of the scenes, Rowley filled so important a part that his share in these plays is very inadequately represented by the scenes that show actual marks of his hand. Indeed, this would appear probable if only from the fact that the joint plays possess qualities that are not to be found in Middleton's unassisted work, but we have found furthermore that precisely these qualities are exceedingly prominent in all the work with which Rowley's name was connected, and this fact, I believe, increasing the probability that his influence upon the plays was strong, throws fresh light upon the whole subject of the Middleton-Rowley partnership.

We are here, of course, upon ground where dogmatic assertion is peculiarly out of place. While we were speaking of differences of literary expression, of characteristics of verse, of repetitions of phrase and simile, we were treating matters that at least admitted of some definite investigation and certainty of discovery. There might well be a difference of opinion as to the amount and kind of evidence necessary to establish a proof, but there could be no doubt but that with sufficient evidence proof was possible. Here, however, speaking of such elusive matters as personal influence, we can only proffer a suggestion as more or less probable, and it is for every reader of Middleton and Rowley to decide for himself whether the romantic tone of "A Fair Quarrel," "The Changeling," and the "The Spanish Gipsy," like as it is to the tone of Rowley's unassisted plays, and unlike that of Middleton's ; the respect for human nature, especially for women, which is shown in the treatment of character in all these plays, although it is so noticeably lacking in the plays of Middleton ; and the repetition and similar treatment

here of episodes that appear in Rowley's plays; whether all these facts do or do not indicate any influence of Rowley upon these great dramas which is not explained when we say, as I believe the preceding investigation has justified us in saying, that he wrote the first scene and the underplot of "A Fair Quarrel," the first part of "A World Tost at Tennis," the second act of "The Spanish Gipsy," and the first and last scenes, as well as the underplot, of "The Changeling."

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